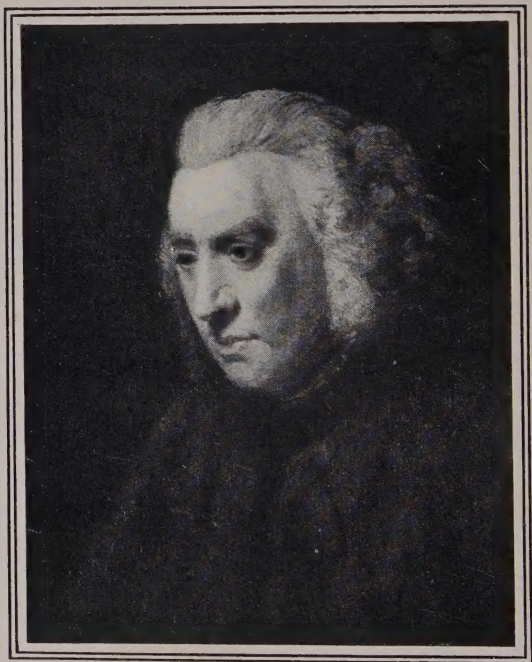


BOSWELL'S
LIFE OF
JOHNSON



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DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

From the portrait by James Opie. Courtesy of the
National Portrait Gallery, London

BOSWELL'S LIFE *of* DR. JOHNSON

ABRIDGED AND EDITED BY

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BOSWELL'S
LIFE OF DR. JOHNSON

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PREFACE

In preparing this revised edition of my selections from Boswell I have made several important changes. The account of Boswell himself has been entirely rewritten in view of the new and highly significant material that has appeared concerning him during the past ten years, particularly the various books of Chauncey Brewster Tinker. The reading lists have similarly been brought up-to-date.

Two new sections have been added, in response to requests from teachers who have used this book in its earlier form. There is now an account of "The Writing of Biographies," a form of literature that has recently become amazingly but deservedly popular. There is also a study of "Johnson's England," its manners and customs, so that students may enter the pages of Boswell with a greater sense of familiarity.

The book has, furthermore, been given a new and more attractive format, and most of the illustrations have been collected especially for this edition.

Boswell's fame continues to be perennial, and there can certainly be no more profitable and pleasant task for the English teacher than to encourage in pupils a liking for him and for his extraordinary book, which is at the same time a gallery of unforgettable portraits and a mirror of an amusing and great era. In it may be found many striking sentiments on life and literature and much plain wisdom regarding everyday affairs; and from it may be gained some acquaintance with the art of conversation — both how it should and how it should not be conducted. The unsurpassed skill of Boswell as a biographer is today less disputed than ever, in view of the great multitude of recent biographies the writers of which (whether they realize and acknowledge it or not) follow the technique that he originated.

Few works have won for themselves so much affection as Boswell's masterpiece, and even those who, like Macaulay, despise the author, read his production with delight again and again. The last book that Macaulay himself read, coming to it once more after many earlier perusals, was Boswell's *Life*.

The attempt has been made in the following selections to have Boswell tell a story as nearly consecutive as possible. The gaps have been made as unobtrusive as possible, but the words of Boswell have in no case been altered. The spelling has been modernized and the punctuation, in a number of places, changed in accordance with modern canons.

Necessarily much that was good had to be omitted, and it is hoped that any one who misses in these pages some favorite passage will for that and other reasons lead students on to read Boswell unabridged. The division into chapters was adopted as a help to the modern reader.

The choice of particular passages was often dictated by the fact that many teachers will wish to use Boswell's biography in conjunction with Macaulay's famous *Life of Johnson*. The student will compare to his advantage the methods of two masters of the art of biography; and to enable him to do this the more readily, sections in Boswell have been selected that Macaulay employed as material. As Boswell and Macaulay are compared, it will be evident that Macaulay, in his characteristic way, often laid the colors on too thick, and that he was sometimes vigorous at the expense of accuracy. A set of exercises has been provided to guide the student in this stimulating task of comparison.

M. J. H.

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INTRODUCTION

JAMES BOSWELL

James Boswell, whose *Life of Dr. Johnson* at once took its place as the greatest of all biographies, was born in Edinburgh on October 29, 1740. Alexander Boswell, his father, a strong Whig and active member of the Scotch church, was by profession a lawyer, and in 1754 was raised to the bench with the title of Lord Auchinleck.¹ The estate of the family had, in the course of the years, grown to considerable extent, until in the days of our Boswell the laird of Auchinleck could ride ten miles forward from the door of his house without leaving his own land, and six hundred people on this vast tract were attached to him as overlord.

To Lord Auchinleck James Boswell was as distracting as the traditional ugly duckling in the hen's brood. From his early youth Boswell was a baffling problem; and he has remained so to his critics and biographers down to the present time. As a young man he was something of a ne'er-do-well. He was vain, inquisitive, boastful, given overmuch to the drinking of wine, and fond of boisterous company. He often made good resolutions, but was just as often a backslider. In politics and in religion alike he vexed his father's heart, and there were frequently bitter quarrels between sire and son, accompanied sometimes by threats of disinherittance. As Chauncey Brewster Tinker has well phrased it, "The story of James Boswell is for those who are ready and able to realize that greatness may be linked with folly or, indeed, spring out of it."

And yet, as Professor Tinker also shows, the father made a distinct appeal to the son as good material about which to write and talk. The old gentleman "belonged in a novel." He had keen wit, strong prejudices, and a gift of phrasing; he was chock-full of anecdotes and he had learned shrewd

¹ Pronounced as a dissyllable, "Affleck."

wisdom from his observation of many kinds of life. One trait James Boswell undoubtedly inherited from his father: his love of a good story.

Yet, although in many ways Boswell was a foolish and reckless youth, he had certain qualities which ought to have won him some approbation. He had an ardent respect and admiration for learning, coupled perhaps with somewhat too high a view of his own attainments. He had, moreover, a particular veneration for persons older than he was, especially if they were men who were notable for some great achievement or for nobility of character. His three most celebrated friends in later years — John Wilkes, General Paoli, and Dr. Johnson — were, respectively, thirteen, fifteen, and thirty-one years older than he was. His two favorite friends in Scotland, Sir David Dalrymple (later Lord Hailes) and Sir Alexander Dick, were fourteen and thirty-seven years older than Boswell.

Carlyle, in his celebrated essay on Boswell, sought to explain this trait in the Scotch writer as a form of "hero worship," but although there was an element of this worship in Boswell's nature, it was by no means an indiscriminating worship. He maintained an attitude of inquiry toward these older men, and sought to gain from them the fruits of their greater experience of life and answers to the thousand questions that puzzled him. He constantly sought advice from his elders; and it may be added that the men whom Boswell most venerated were not always those whom the world at large admired. He often had the sense to perceive greatness beneath an uninviting exterior or in hidden corners of the earth; Corsica for example.

Boswell, in four years spent at Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities, acquired a considerable knowledge of the law. He resolved, however, before settling down to make the "Grand Tour" of the Continent, and obtained the reluctant consent of his father.

It was before he set out, in 1763, that he made the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson, as described in Chapter V of this book. In getting to know Johnson, Boswell satisfied one of his dearest ambitions—to enjoy the company of

men of genius. It is absurd to think of him, as some critics have done, as a "climber." Boswell was the descendant of Robert Bruce and the son of an important and wealthy Scots law-lord, and he had, and needed to have, no feeling of social inferiority in his intercourse with the great. Undoubtedly he liked to push his way forward ("He forced himself upon me," wrote Horace Walpole to Thomas Gray, "in spite of my teeth and my doors"), but he felt his greatest triumphs when he won the friendship of men of ability rather than men of rank and wealth. He met and conversed with George III, but he left no record of his conversation, whereas of Dr. Johnson's talk he set down every scrap. As to Johnson, it is well to remember that most of his contemporaries saw in him a poor, repulsively ugly, uncouth person, eccentric, morbid, and gloomy, with disgusting table manners. But Boswell realized him as the most enchanting of companions, as a man of profound charity, as a great moralist; and he managed, too, to bring out the fact that despite his gloom, he was a master of comedy.

On the Continent Boswell first stayed at Utrecht. Later he traveled in other parts of Holland, in Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. With his usual persistence and impudence he saw and heard a great deal that was worth while. He managed to meet, on an intimate basis, both Voltaire and Rousseau, and he had at least one ardent love affair. He varied the usual course of the European tour by visiting Corsica, where he made the acquaintance of a stalwart, noble soul, General Paoli, the would-be liberator of that island. For Boswell was always interested in aspiring or liberty-loving nations; he was from the first a sympathizer with the American colonists, and he had an interest in the aspirations of Ireland. When Paoli was obliged to take refuge in England, his home in London became Boswell's residence whenever he was in that city, and Paoli always exercised a wholesome influence on Boswell. When Boswell introduced Paoli to Dr. Johnson, he compared himself to "an isthmus which joins two continents."

On his return, Boswell became a busy and successful

lawyer in Edinburgh, although he constantly longed to establish himself in London. He had already begun to write. In 1761 he had published "An Ode to Tragedy" anonymously — and, with somewhat sly humor, dedicated it to himself, remarking in the dedicatory letter: "I make no doubt, Sir, but you would consider me your very good friend; although some people — and those, too, not destitute of wisdom — will not scruple to insinuate the contrary." That Boswell knew himself pretty well is obvious from some verses he wrote about himself when he was president of the Soaping Club at Edinburgh:

Boswell is pleasant and gay,
For frolic by nature designed;
He heedlessly rattles away
Where the company is to his mind.
"This maxim," he says, "you may see,
We ne'er can have corn without chaff;"
So not a bent sixpence cares he,
Whether *with* him or *at* him you laugh.

He produced a book about his travels in Corsica, and in this he exhibited those qualities that were later to make his *Life of Dr. Johnson* notable — the power to render a situation graphically, to tell an anecdote in an effective way, and to characterize the persons of his story vividly.

As his fruitful friendship with Dr. Johnson continued, Boswell conceived the idea of producing a biography of his famous friend. So he jotted down notes of his conversations with him and sought in every way to secure information about Johnson's early years. One day when Johnson heard Boswell asking his intimate Levett a long series of questions about him, he became very exasperated. "Sir," he declared, "you have but two topics, yourself and me. I am sick of both."

Meanwhile Boswell made the acquaintance of Johnson's circle of friends, ultimately being admitted to the famous Literary Club, which Dr. Johnson and Sir Joshua Reynolds had founded. Johnson, it must be remembered, was more than fifty years old when Boswell first made his acquaintance.

The relations between the two men, despite moments of exasperation, were cordial, at times affectionate. Johnson realized the deep veneration entertained for him by Boswell, and he could not fail to perceive that the latter possessed certain noble qualities. Moreover, his own melancholy moods were dispelled by Boswell's high spirits. At times Boswell, under the influence of vanity or, worse still, of wine, was guilty of offenses against good taste; but Johnson, like Paoli, exercised on the young Scotchman a wholesome and paternal influence.

In 1769 Boswell married a cousin and set up a home, still not without difficulties with his father. In 1773 he and Johnson carried out a long-cherished idea of touring Scotland and the Hebrides. They left Edinburgh on August 18, and traveled for almost two and a half months. Throughout the trip Boswell exerted all his ingenuity and influence to give Johnson a good time. They saw everything worth seeing, met every one of note, and acquired much interesting information. They were a remarkable pair, the clumsy, wise English lexicographer and the unimpressive, clever Scotch lawyer. Johnson wrote an account of the trip that was published immediately; Boswell's account was not issued until after Johnson's death.

The friendly intercourse between the two men continued, with some interruptions, until Johnson's death in 1784. Then Boswell set about preparing his collected material for the press, first the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, then on Monday, May 16, 1791 (by a lucky chance the twenty-eighth anniversary of his first meeting with Johnson), his *magnum opus*, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL. D.* Thereafter Boswell's life was but a sorry one. He cherished unwise political ambitions, he attempted to secure a practice at the London bar, he allowed some of his bad personal habits to get the better of him. His only consolation was the preparation of a second edition of the *Life*; for it had been a great and immediate success, 1200 copies being disposed of in four months — a considerable number for those days. On May 19, 1795, he died after an illness of five weeks.

In stature James Boswell was somewhat above the middle height. He walked with a stately gait, was inclined to corpulency, and in his attire observed the latest fashions. He had a large head, and wore a powdered wig. His prominent but well-set features beamed with perpetual good humor. "It was impossible," remarked a contemporary, "to look in his face without being moved by the comicality which always reigned upon it." He talked much and with rapidity. He was a master in social intercourse of the "art of friction," deliberately bringing together persons of incongruous character or introducing topics likely to cause controversy, in order to see what would happen.

The view is sometimes entertained that Boswell wrote his great work with unconscious art, by accident as it were. No view could be further from the mark. He himself in his introduction to the *Life* describes his methods in a way that shows he employed deliberate art. He says:

"Instead of melting down my materials into one mass and constantly speaking in my own person, by which I might have appeared to have more merit in the execution of the work, I have resolved to adopt and enlarge upon the excellent plan of Mr. Mason, in his *Memoirs of Gray*. Wherever narrative is necessary to explain, connect, and supply, I furnish it to the best of my abilities; but in the chronological series of Johnson's life, which I trace as distinctly as I can, year by year, I produce, wherever it is in my power, his own minutes, letters, or conversation, being convinced that this mode is more lively, and will make my readers better acquainted with him, than even most of those were who actually knew him, but could know him only partially; whereas there is here an accumulation of intelligence from various points, by which the character is more fully understood and illustrated."

Again, in a letter to his life-long confidant, the Rev. William Johnson Temple, Boswell wrote: "I am absolutely certain that my mode of biography, which gives not only a history of Johnson's visible progress through the world and of his publications, but a view of his mind in his letters and conversa-

tions, is the most perfect that can be conceived, and will be more of a Life than any work that has ever appeared," an opinion in which time has certainly justified him. In another letter he claimed of his book that it might be "without exception the most entertaining book ever read." Finally, he speaks of "the Flemish portrait" he draws of Johnson, from which "the most minute particulars" must not be absent, and this comparison to painters like Rembrandt is fully justified.

Two of Johnson's closest friends delivered illuminating opinions on Boswell's *Life*. Burke, the greatest of English orators, said: "He [Johnson] is greater in Boswell's books than in his own." In other words, Boswell gives posterity a finer and truer idea of the essential greatness of the renowned sage than a reading of *Rasselas* or *The Lives of the Poets* would give. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the great painter, remarked that every word of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* might be depended upon as if delivered upon oath, and he permitted the book to be dedicated to him.

This remark of Reynolds's emphasizes one of Boswell's most admirable qualities — his indefatigable zeal in verifying information given him about Johnson. No trouble was too great, no energy wasted that enabled him to clinch a fact as true. Equally great was his care in writing down Johnson's conversation; and he often stayed up all night to make a record of a talk with Johnson. During a particularly brilliant conversation of Johnson's, Boswell remarked to Mrs. Thrale, "O for shorthand to take this down!" and she replied, "You'll carry it all in your head. A long head is as good as shorthand." But Boswell often made immediate notes, and Fanny Burney called him "the memorandummer."

Other qualities of Boswell are brought out in the comments of critics quoted elsewhere in this Introduction; the student should consult these. The reader whose curiosity has been roused as to the strange character of James Boswell might remember Boswell's observation regarding himself, that "from a certain peculiarly open, frank, and ostentatious disposition which he avows, his history, like that of the old

Seigneur Michael de Montaigne, is to be traced in his writings."

THE WRITING OF BIOGRAPHIES

Although the formal writing of "lives of men" did not come until late in the development of literature, it is probable that biographies were among the earliest forms of composition. For from the very beginning people worshipped heroes; and the accounts of the lives of such heroes were really biographies. Sometimes, however, such biographies were cast into the form of poetic narratives and were called epics; at other times, a drama would relate a man's heroic career; or, again, the chronicle of a famous leader's doings would become part of the Bible of a nation. Homer in the *Odyssey* relates the life of Ulysses as does Virgil that of Æneas in the *Æneid*. The Scriptures of the Hebrews give a full account of the career of such men as Joseph, Samson, and King David.

But biography in the modern sense did not arrive until the time of the great Greek writer Plutarch, the father of biography. Plutarch, who lived during the first century of our era, was greatly impressed by the likenesses and differences of the Greeks and the Romans; and he composed a series of "lives" of famous men of both peoples. In each instance he compared a Greek with a Roman. Plutarch had a keen sense of human nature, and he delineates his characters with faithful lifelikeness. He was, too, an avid story-teller, and his *Parallel Lives* are rich in anecdotes, amusing and instructive. From Plutarch Shakespeare, like some of his contemporaries, derived material for his plays; *Julius Cæsar*, for example.

Among the Romans, Tacitus, primarily a historian, wrote one notable biography, that of Agricola; and Suetonius composed *Lives of the Cæsars*. Many other historians, of course, included long biographical sketches in their works; and some have gone so far as to say (with Emerson) that there is properly no history; only biography. During the Middle Ages there were innumerable *Lives of the Saints*

and occasional biographies of kings and other important leaders. With Izaak Walton we come to one of the earliest of modern biographers. This writer, best known for his quaint classic, *The Compleat Angler*, composed the lives of five "worthies" all personally known to him, and of them he wrote in a simple, quaint, friendly way that has endeared his sketches to all readers since his time.

Throughout the eighteenth century the practice of writing biographies became common, but most of the "lives" of this period have ceased to be read — because they were written too easily. It remained for a genius of an unusual kind — James Boswell — to produce a masterpiece of biography that has never been surpassed. Boswell realized that a good biography was more than the narration of a series of events in a man's life. He stressed selection of incidents, he stressed absolute truthfulness, and he stressed unending diligence in collecting facts. From an earlier biographer, William Mason, author of a life of the poet Thomas Gray, Boswell took, moreover, the idea of interspersing letters and other material in the narrative of a man's career. His *Life of Dr. Johnson* has set the pace for all later biographies.

Dr. Johnson himself was, incidentally, a biographer, and his *Lives of the English Poets* is his most readable work. Johnson, moreover, lover of human nature as he was, greatly enjoyed biography and biographical details. A contemporary said of him that "General history had little of his regard. Biography was his delight. The proper study of mankind is man. Sooner than hear about the Punic Wars, he would be rude to the person that introduced the subject," for, said Johnson, the Punic Wars "carried one away from common life" as biographies did not.

During the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, biographies beyond all count have been composed in every civilized language. Some typical and noted biographers are Southey (*Life of Nelson*), Lockhart (*Life of Sir Walter Scott*), Carlyle (*Life of Frederick the Great*), Macaulay (*Life of Johnson*), Sir Sidney Lee (*Life of Shakespeare*), George Otto Trevelyan (*Life of Macaulay*), Lytton Strachey (*Queen*

Victoria), Albert Bigelow Paine (*Life of Mark Twain*), Emil Ludwig (*Napoleon*), Anatole France (*Joan of Arc*), and André Maurois (*Disraeli*).

As one looks back over the development of biographies and as one reads volumes of biography, it becomes apparent that there are three kinds or types of "lives." These may be distinguished as the *mausoleum*, the *photograph*, and the *portrait*.

1. The mausoleum among biographies is found most frequently in what are called "memorial biographies"; that is, lives of famous men or women written by some relative or by some biographer completely controlled by relatives. The object of such books is merely to erect a pious memorial—to tell nothing but what is good, to conceal all flaws. The result is something as cold and forbidding as most cemetery monuments are. The purpose of a memorial biography is, supposedly, to preserve the fame of its subject, but such books defeat themselves and are soon forgotten. An example, somewhat better than the average, is Hallam Tennyson's life of his father, the great poet.

2. A biography done in the manner of a photograph is purely mechanical. Often it is extremely lengthy, running occasionally to numerous volumes. Everything that occurred to the subject of the biography is included; the minutest scraps of information are given, in the same way that a camera "takes" everything within range of its lens. Such biographies are useful; and if the subject is a very great man, they may even be interesting, but they are not the finest type of biography. Thus the career of Disraeli has been described by Monypenny and Buckle in six volumes.

3. The great biographies, like Boswell's, are portraits. They are the work of conscious artists, who shape their material in accordance with a definite plan, who omit details here, sharpen the outline there, stress lightly in one place, touch up the background elsewhere. The result is a living human being. Such biographies are as delightful to read as a fine novel or poem; they may be read for their own sake as well as for the information they convey. From

them one may learn of human nature, its wisdom and folly; and the past through them is made even more vivid than our own daily surroundings are.

During recent years the true biography, that done in the manner of a portrait, has appeared in increasing numbers. Ultimately, Boswell is the model of the portrait-life, but it is to an Englishman, Lytton Strachey, that the revival of this type of biography is primarily due. His life of Queen Victoria, succeeding an earlier book called *Eminent Victorians*, created a sensation, and it has stimulated an increasing number of imitators. "A well-written life," remarked Carlyle somewhat sadly, "is almost as rare as a well-spent one," but he would not need to make this complaint were he living today. A remarkable number of entertainingly and effectively written biographies have poured forth from the presses in recent years; and not only American and English writers have produced such "lives," but men like Emil Ludwig in Germany and André Maurois in France have written biographies, available in good English translations, that give a true artistic view of famous men and women and their characters.

It is a cardinal rule of the new type of biographer, it may be added, that all information must be accurate — again following Boswell's lead, — and it is an equally significant principle with them, as it was with Boswell, that the bad as well as the good shall be told, in order that an honest portrait may result. These biographers follow the direction that Oliver Cromwell once gave to the painter Sir Peter Lely. Lely, Cromwell noticed, was "beautifying" the portrait that he was doing of him. "Put in the warts, sir," ordered Cromwell sternly. Modern biographers do not leave out the warts.

Some special forms of biography may be mentioned. The *autobiography* has produced some highly entertaining reading. One of the earliest men to write his own life was the Renaissance artist, Benvenuto Cellini. A famous modern example is Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, which appeared in America in the same year that Boswell's biography appeared in England. In modern times many people have

written about themselves in a most delightful way — Admiral Robley D. Evans, "Margot" Asquith, Helen Keller, Edward Bok, and Winston Churchill among many others. The best kind of autobiography tells the truth frankly and amusingly. The *diary* is a kind of autobiography, but less formal and even franker, as the famous examples of Samuel Pepys and Samuel Sewall, in England and America respectively, prove.

JOHNSON'S ENGLAND

In March 1737, Boswell records, "Johnson thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope and the highest encouragement. It is a memorable circumstance that his pupil, David Garrick, went thither at the same time, with intent to complete his education and follow the profession of the law, from which he was soon diverted by his decided preference for the stage."

This was not, however, Johnson's first visit to London. As a child of two and a half, he had been taken by his mother to the metropolis that Queen Anne might "touch" him for the scrofula that marred his features all his life.

But the London to which he and Garrick now came was a larger city than it had been in Queen Anne's day; it was more thickly populated, and the manners and customs of its inhabitants were changing rapidly as wealth increased. As the burly figure of Johnson and the slight figure of Garrick moved along the streets of the city, there would be many a sight to open wider the eyes of these two young men from the country.

In the earlier part of the eighteenth century London occupied a strip only four miles long and half-a-mile wide; and the rest of what is the sprawling city of today was then still suburban or genuine open country. All its inhabitants could therefore easily get a breath of fresh air and enjoy the outdoors; and an active-legged and active-minded person like Johnson would readily become acquainted with the whole of London, a city he grew to love greatly. But the

town grew rapidly, and between 1750 and 1765 new houses are said to have gone up at the rate of more than a thousand a year.

As Johnson and Garrick walked the streets of London, they would find that the walls of the city still stood in places, although they were rapidly falling to pieces; and the gates of the city were closed at sundown as late as 1760. The only pavement on the streets, both for the road and the footway, consisted of large, round pebbles, over which the rolling of vehicles made a thunderous noise. In 1762, however, the roads began to be paved with squares of Scotch granite laid in gravel; a curb and gutters were provided, and the footway was paved with flat stones. But even with such improvements, the streets of London were dirty, narrow, and smelly. Open gutters were filled with filth and garbage; carts splashed passers-by; low roofs or penthouses projected over the sidewalks from the first stories of houses, and from the gutter pipes of these roofs poured, in the frequently rainy weather of London, great streams on those who passed beneath. At night the streets were ill-lighted and ill-protected against thieves. Lamps burned only from six to midnight, and well-to-do citizens often had attendants with torches accompany them.

As Johnson walked past this shop or that he recognized it not by any number on top, for houses were not numbered, but by the signs which hung overhead and by the cries of the proprietors as they stood in their shop-doors asking passers-by to come in. His ears would be deafened, moreover, by the shouts of hundreds of street peddlers crying their wares, by the voices of ballad singers, by the urgings of sedan carriers to "make way!" and by a score other noises of London streets. There would be many disputes over the right of way, accompanied by much swearing, and courtesy as a "rule of the road" began to be observed only later in the century.

Only those who walked close to the houses were safe from the overflow of gutters, and in Johnson's youth there was constant quarreling as to who should "keep the wall."

"In the last age," said Johnson himself, "when my mother lived in London, there were two sets of people, — those who gave the wall and those who took it; the peaceable and the quarrelsome. When I returned to Lichfield, after having been in London, my mother asked me whether I was one of those that took the wall, or those who gave it. *Now* it is fixed that every man keeps to the right; or if one is taking the wall, another yields it; and it is never a dispute."

One imagines that in 1737 Johnson's huge frame caused passers-by to give the wall to him respectfully without question.

Johnson's first care undoubtedly was to find a lodging, but where he first resided is not known. Probably he lived in the region of London called "Little Britain," in which many booksellers were to be found. Later he resided in an Exeter Street garret at eightpence a week; but he seems to have changed his place of residence frequently. Early in 1749 he removed to 17 Gough Square, north of Fleet Street, and there he lived for ten years. Here the *Dictionary* was prepared, and here such famous works as *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, *The Rambler*, *The Idler*, and *Rasselas* were composed. Another London house in which Johnson resided for a considerable period — from March 1776 to his death in December 1784 — was 8 Bolt Court, between Gough Square and Fleet Street. In the garden at the back of this house Johnson gathered three bunches of grapes only a few weeks before his death. Here many of the conversations with Boswell took place.

The men and women whom Johnson passed on the streets of London dressed in a fashion that to us seems most picturesque. We are all familiar with the wig and the knee buckles of the men, the hoop and the powdered headdresses of the women, as shown in the portraits of figures of the American Revolution. Men wore close-shaven heads covered by wigs. These wigs were usually tied in the nape of the neck, and were called "tie wigs"; those for dress occasions were perfumed, powdered, and curled. At home in the morning a man might discard his wig and wear a nightcap or turban instead.

A beau of this period (sometimes called a *macaroni*) was very ornate indeed. His coat was of silk, satin, or velvet, elaborately laced; a snuff-box lay in his pocket or was employed with many gestures; at his side was a sword, and often under his arm he carried a clouded amber cane. These macaroni (whose name has survived in "Yankee Doodle") were the extremest of the extreme in fashion; they were young, brainless, and passionately interested in dress.

For daily wear most gentlemen of this period were clad in a dark tie wig, a plain coat, waistcoat and breeches of snuff-colored cloth, and stockings of the same color. Horace Walpole on a state occasion wore a lavender suit, the waistcoat embroidered with a little silver, partridge-colored stockings, gold buckles, ruffles, lace frill, and a powdered wig.

Fashions in women's dress changed then, as now, somewhat more rapidly than those in men's. In 1744 hoops of enormous size were the fad, and women's heads were trimmed to appear phenomenally small. A little close-fitting cap was worn; and if the lady were dressed in the "milk-maid" or rustic style then fashionable, she had a small straw hat. By 1767 a reaction had set in, and enormous structures of horsehair began to be worn, powdered with a mixture of pomatum and meal. During the time when the American colonists were fighting for their independence, this fashion reached an extreme. There were "heads" or "pompons" a yard high, upon which were displayed ribbons, lace, even butterflies in spun glass. In front was stuck a tall ostrich feather, curling forwards. The tops of sedan chairs, it is said, had to be removed to allow room for these remarkable "heads."

As Johnson studied the men and women of his time, he would have been able to distinguish two distinct types of temperament and appearance. These may be differentiated as the robust and boorish type on the one hand, the thin and quizzical on the other. A large proportion of the elder men of this time had heavy, corpulent figures. As Thackeray, in the next century, was to see them, "Swift was fat, Addison was fat, Gay and Thomson were preposterously fat. All that fuddling and punch-drinking, that club and coffee-house

boozing shortened the lives and enlarged the waistcoats of men of that age." But there were men of the opposite type, who had neither the inclination nor the digestive powers to consume huge quantities of fat beef and gallons of port wine. Such were Lord Hervey, who lived on a diet of extreme severity, and Horace Walpole, who drank nothing stronger than ice water.

Yet, although some persons of that age went to an extreme in the use of food and drink, there was in Johnson's time a growing comfort in food, accompanied by a growing refinement in drinking.

The luxuries of every class greatly increased. Even the poor now drank tea, and it became the national beverage, Cowper later in the century hailing "the cup that cheers but ne'er inebriates." The lower classes had, too, potatoes, turnips, carrots, and cabbage, wheat bread, and frequently beef or mutton at reasonable prices. In the fashionable world people dined as late as five o'clock. Those of limited means often found that dining at a rich man's house was an expensive procedure, inasmuch as all his servants would draw up in a line at the guests' departure, each expecting a "vail" or tip.

Perhaps the change in drinking habits illustrates the growing refinement of this age as well as anything. The hard drinking of the early years of the century gave way to moderation in its later decades. Dr. Johnson systematically drank three bottles of port at a sitting in his younger days, and remembered the time when all decent people got drunk every night without the fear of criticism. In his later days he was very temperate, for periods a total abstainer. He ascribed the change in manners to the substitution of wine for beer. But people were in general becoming more delicate in their feelings and reactions, and they were repelled by the demeanor of a drunken man.

For under the influence of foreign travel, greater wealth, and improved education manners improved steadily. Those who traveled abroad regretted usually the absence of refinement among the English. In some circles the way in

which men and women of the world conducted themselves was carefully taught; and graceful movements and properly chosen language were inculcated. Even in poetry there was a tendency to avoid the slightest suggestion of the gross, and one poet mentioned a "gelid cistern" when he meant a "cold bath," and another spoke of "the shining leather that encased the limb" when he meant a "shoe." But although this roundabout way of saying things will not do for poetry, it often has a pleasing effect in prose, especially in social intercourse.

Chief representative of the refinement of society was Lord Chesterfield, from whose name is derived an adjective that denotes elegance of manners. Although Chesterfield, as the reader of these extracts from Boswell will see, incurred the just wrath of Johnson, he set up a model of courtesy and refinement not yet outworn. He had, to be sure, the formality of his age, but it was formality not without a gracious aspect. He taught that it is boorish to congratulate a friend on his approaching marriage merely by saying, "I wish you joy." What one should say is this: "Believe me, my dear sir, I have scarce words to express the joy I feel upon your happy alliance with such or such a family."

Eating was an important diversion of most people of the eighteenth century, but they had other forms of amusement as well. Gambling at cards was exceedingly popular; so were prize-fighting, cock-fighting, horse-racing, dancing, attendance at public gardens, sessions in coffee-houses and taverns, and going to the play.

From the reign of Queen Anne to the beginning of the nineteenth century, gambling was a craze, a disease among the English leisured classes of both sexes. Two famous gambling houses in London were White's and Almack's, and high play at such places was regarded as eminently respectable. It was, by the way, at one of these gambling places that a homely invention was made still in constant use. The Earl of Sandwich, a government official, was a player who often sat for hours without interruption at the gaming table. On one occasion, unwilling to leave but faint for lack of food,

he called for a bit of beef between two slices of bread, and thus accidentally gave his name to a still popular nutritive device.

The theater was much frequented, and two great actors — David Garrick and Mrs. Sarah Siddons — lent it a luster equal to that of its best days. The audience was at times as boisterous as it had been in the time of Shakespeare; and on one occasion it manifested its disapproval of something that Garrick did by overwhelming the gentlemen in the boxes, demolishing the scenery, and then going out and breaking all the windows in Garrick's house. As in the time of Shakespeare, too, persons of quality still sat on the stage; and they came as much to be seen as to see. Dr. Johnson, because of his defective eyesight, did not go much to the theater; but when he said of the death of Garrick that it "eclipsed the gayety of nations," he paid the most splendid tribute ever given to an actor.

Another favorite form of diversion for Londoners was attendance during the summer months at the public gardens, the most popular of which were Vauxhall and Ranelagh. In the eleven acres at Vauxhall might be found a pavilion for open-air vaudeville, a rotunda for use in showery weather, temples, colonnades, and triumphal arches; much allegorical painting on all sides, lighting devices that for those days were exceedingly brilliant, a waterworks (patrons often joked about it as the "tin cascade"), and innumerable tables for the serving of expensive foods and drinks. Ranelagh was described as a kind of "Vauxhall under cover," and for a time after its establishment it became so much the fashion to go there that the other place was completely eclipsed. Other places similar to these catered to all classes of Londoners, and became fashionable for breakfast parties, for bowling, and for cold bathing in the open air.

Johnson liked all forms of diversion; they filled the intervals, he said, between thought and vacuity; and he affirmed of public amusements in general that they kept people from vice. Once he went to Marylebone Gardens to see some fireworks. The evening was wet, and the damp

squibs and Catharine wheels declined to go off. Johnson resented this as stinginess on the part of the management, and threatened to smash the colored lamps; his suggestion was promptly acted upon by some young men standing near by. It is not known whether he ever attended Vauxhall, although he knew well one of the two sons of its proprietor, but he often went to Ranelagh, finding it, he said, "a place of innocent recreation"; and he stated on another occasion: "When I first entered Ranelagh, it gave an expansion and gay sensation to my mind, such as I never experienced anywhere else."

Taverns and coffee-houses continued to cater to sociability. Many clubs were established, and Johnson to his very last years liked to frequent gatherings of mixed characters, where the food and the conversation were equally good. "There is no private house," he told Boswell, "in which people can enjoy themselves so well as in a capital tavern. At a tavern you are sure you are welcome; and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are." To another friend he declared that "a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity." It was said of Johnson that he had probably been in every tavern and coffee-house in his section of London and in many elsewhere. One inn associated with his name, the Cheshire Cheese in Wine Office Court, is still standing, and there the Johnson Club of today meets.

Traveling was, of course, another leading diversion of that time as of ours, and one in which Johnson himself indulged as often as he could, his most famous journey being that to the Hebrides with Boswell. From London mail coaches started every night at eight o'clock. They were timed for seven miles an hour, and the fare for passengers was fourpence a mile. In addition to coaches for other parts of England, there were innumerable stages to the various sections of London; these usually charged passengers threepence a mile. People also traveled in private conveyances and on horseback. The roads were often poor, and there were frequently great stretches of forest to traverse. The

drainage was so bad that in the wet season the roads became impassable. But in the course of the century road making improved; to pay the cost of these tolls were generally charged.

In good weather the highways would be alive with traffic, and the inns would swarm with life. Then one might see ponderous country wagons and light coaches in which the wealthy traveled, and packhorses. If one stayed at an inn away from the city, one might see the squire of the region — solidly built, red-faced, adored by his tenants; or the country parson — on his way to the cathedral town, with his wife riding pillion behind. But it was the rising merchant class that was chiefly in evidence during the eighteenth century, for the great financiers of London and of other parts of England were coming to the fore and playing a greater and greater rôle in social as in political affairs. They and their families journeyed in high state to the spas or watering places of England, or they traveled to enjoy the good things of London after staying a while at the estates that they had newly purchased.

One must not forget that Johnson, however much he enjoyed the tavern, certainly attended church with devotion, though somewhat intermittently. He once told a friend that he waited for some secret impulse before he attended divine services. "Whenever I miss church on a Sunday," he told Boswell, "I resolve to go another day. But I do not always do it." He was, however, strict in his observance of Sunday, carefully regulating his Sunday reading. His favorite place of worship was St. Clement Danes, where he was well known. Here he had his seat in pew 18, north gallery, next to the pulpit. On April 9, 1773, he took Boswell there with him. "I never shall forget," said his companion, "the tremulous earnestness with which he pronounced the awful petition in the Litany: 'In the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, Good Lord, deliver us!'" Eleven years later, after being confined with sickness for one hundred and twenty-nine days, he returned thanks to God in the same church for his recovery.

Had Johnson wished to sum up his own era in a phrase, he might have called it "the social century." It was an age

when people liked to get together in coffee-house and club, in the drawing-room and the playhouse; and the art of conversation was raised to a high pitch. People felt comfortable; and improved means of transportation, an increase in the good things of life, and the gradual spread of democratic feeling made them more companionable.

Yet, in addition, Johnson might have been able to boast of the century in which he lived that it had produced many great men, in all fields of activity; that it had been marked by numerous important changes. During the day of Johnson the novel, the epic of the average man, was born. The commercial or middle classes seized the reins of power. England acquired Canada and India, still the most valuable parts of her colonial empire. The parliamentary system of government was firmly established. The Industrial Revolution — that is, the modern factory system of production on a large scale — began to run its course. Great political figures like Sir Robert Walpole, the Earl of Chatham, William Pitt, Edmund Burke, and Charles James Fox played their major parts on the stage of Europe and the world. Great explorers, like Admiral Anson and Captain Cook; great writers, like Pope, Addison, Fielding, Swift, Richardson, Goldsmith, Gibbon, and others, produced masterpieces still read today; great painters, like Reynolds and Hogarth; great actors, like Garrick; great scientists and inventors, like Priestley and James Watt, made the era one of the greatest in English history.

Most of this activity centered in London, and there many of those who have been mentioned lived. Johnson, as has been said, loved London, and so did most of his friends. To Burke it was "an endless addition of littleness to littleness," but still "clean, commodious, neat"; and Gibbon said that he loved its very dust. In George Birkbeck Hill's great edition of Boswell, more than five double-column pages of the index are filled with references to the streets, courts, taverns, coffee-houses, clubs, theaters, prisons, summer gardens, offices, residences, and churches of London amid which Johnson wandered, himself the most interesting spectacle of all.

MAP OF LONDON.



LONDON IN 1780.—COVENT GARDEN AND WESTWARD.

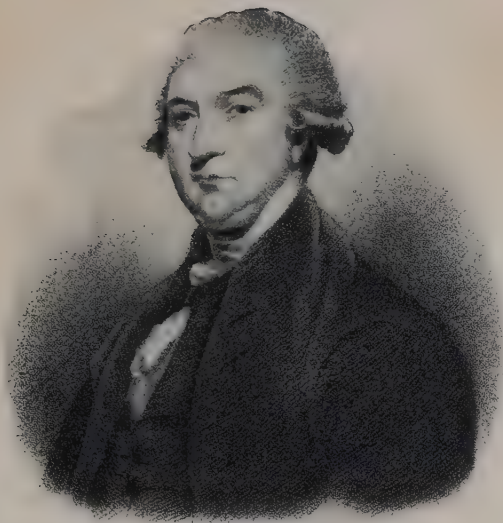
By employing a ruler to determine the boundaries of the lettered and numbered sections, the following places may be located :—

Button's Coffee House, *Y*, 8.
 Cock Lane, *R*, 4.
 Covent Garden, *Y*, 9.
 Drury Lane, *L*, 7.
 Drury Lane Theatre, *K*, 7.
 Fleet St., *P*, 6.
 Grub St., *W*, 2.
 Johnson's Homes :
 Exeter St., *K*, 8.
 Woodstock St., Hanover Sq., *B*, 8.
 Castle St., *H*, 8.
 Strand, *H*, *Y*, 10.
 Holbourn, *N*, 4.

Fetter Lane, *O*, 5, 6.
 Gray's Inn, *M*, 3.
 Inner Temple Lane, *N*, 8.
 Johnson's Ct., Fleet St., *P*, 6.
 Bolt Ct., Fleet St., *P*, 6.
 Leicester House, *F*, 9.
 Literary Club :
 Gerrard St., *F*, 9.
 St. James's St., *C*, 12.
 Mitre Tavern, Fleet St., *P*, 6.
 Newgate, *S*, 5.
 Royal Exchange, *X*, *Y*, 6.
 St. James's Sq., *D*, 12.



LONDON IN 1780—FROM COVENT GARDEN EASTWARD TO LONDON BRIDGE.



JAMES BOSWELL
From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds



JAMES BOSWELL
From an original sketch by George Langton

THE LIFE OF
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

COMPREHENDING AN ACCOUNT OF HIS STUDIES
AND WORKS, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER; A
SERIES OF HIS EPISTOLARY CORRESPONDENCE,
CONVERSATIONS WITH MANY EMINENT PERSONS,
AND ORIGINAL PIECES OF HIS COMPOSITION:
THE WHOLE EXHIBITING A VIEW OF LITERATURE
AND LITERARY MEN IN GREAT BRITAIN, FOR NEAR
HALF A CENTURY DURING WHICH HE FLOURISHED.

By JAMES BOSWELL, Esq.

After my death I wish no other herald,
No other speaker of my living actions,
To keep mine honor from corruption,
But such an honest chronicler as Griffith.¹

¹ See Dr. Johnson's letter of September 30, 1773: "Boswell writes a regular journal of our travels, which I think contains as much of what I say and do, as of all other occurrences together, '*for such a faithful chronicler is Griffith.*'"

DEDICATION TO SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

My Dear Sir,

Every liberal motive that can actuate an Author in the dedication of his labors concurs in directing me to you, as the person to whom the following Work should be inscribed.

If there be a pleasure in celebrating the distinguished merit of a contemporary, mixed with a certain degree of vanity not altogether inexcusable, in appearing fully sensible of it, where can I find one, in complimenting whom I can with more general approbation gratify those feelings? Your excellence not only in the Art over which you have long presided with unrivalled fame, but also in Philosophy and elegant Literature, is well known to the present, and will continue to be the admiration of future ages. Your equal and placid temper, your variety of conversation, your true politeness, by which you are so amiable in private society, and that enlarged hospitality which has long made your house a common centre of union for the great, the accomplished, the learned, and the ingenious; all these qualities I can, in perfect confidence of not being accused of flattery, ascribe to you.

If a man may indulge an honest pride, in having it known to the world, that he has been thought worthy of particular attention by a person of the first eminence in the age in which he lived, whose company has been universally courted, I am justified in availing myself of the usual privilege of a Dedication, when I mention that there has been a long and uninterrupted friendship between us.

If gratitude should be acknowledged for favors received, I have this opportunity, my dear Sir, most sincerely to thank you for the many happy hours which I owe to your kindness, — for the cordiality with which you have at all times been pleased to welcome me, — for the number of valuable acquaintances to whom you have introduced me, — for the

noctes coenaeque Deum,¹ which I have enjoyed under your roof.

If a work should be inscribed to one who is master of the subject of it, and whose approbation, therefore, must ensure it credit and success, the life of Dr. Johnson is, with the greatest propriety, dedicated to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was the intimate and beloved friend of that great man; the friend, whom he declared to be "the most invulnerable man he knew; whom, if he should quarrel with him, he should find the most difficulty how to abuse." You, my dear Sir, studied him, and knew him well: you venerated and admired him. Yet, luminous as he was upon the whole, you perceived all the shades which mingled in the grand composition; all the little peculiarities and slight blemishes which marked the literary Colossus. Your very warm commendation of the specimen which I gave in my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, of my being able to preserve his conversation in an authentic and lively manner, which opinion the Public has confirmed, was the best encouragement for me to persevere in my purpose of producing the whole of my stores.

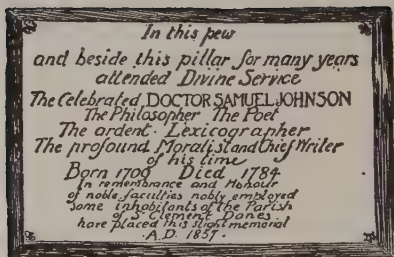
In one respect, this Work will, in some passages, be different from the former. In my *Tour*, I was almost unboundedly open in my communications, and from my eagerness to display the wonderful fertility and readiness of Johnson's wit, freely showed to the world its dexterity, even when I was myself the object of it. I trusted that I should be liberally understood, as knowing very well what I was about, and by no means as simply unconscious of the pointed effects of the satire. I own, indeed, that I was arrogant enough to suppose that the tenor of the rest of the book would sufficiently guard me against such a strange imputation. But it seems I judged too well of the world; for, though I could scarcely believe it, I have been undoubtedly informed, that many persons, especially in distant quarters, not penetrating enough into Johnson's character, so as to understand his mode of treating his friends, have arraigned my judgment, instead of seeing that I was sensible of all that they could observe.

¹ Nights and feasts of the gods.

It is related of the great Dr. Clarke, that when in one of his leisure hours he was unbending himself with a few friends in the most playful and frolicsome manner, he observed Beau Nash approaching; upon which he suddenly stopped;—"My boys, (said he), let us be grave: here comes a fool." The world, my friend, I have found to be a great fool, as to that particular on which it has become necessary to speak very plainly. I have, therefore, in this Work been more reserved; and though I tell nothing but the truth, I have still kept in my mind that the whole truth is not always to be exposed. This, however, I have managed so as to occasion no diminution of the pleasure which my book should afford; though malignity may sometimes be disappointed of its gratifications.

I am,
My dear Sir,
Your much obliged friend,
And faithful humble servant,
JAMES BOSWELL.

LONDON,
April 20, 1791.



INSCRIPTION ON THE PEW IN ST. CLEMENT DANES

THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL. D.

CHAPTER I (1709-1737)

BIRTH, EDUCATION, AND EARLY YEARS

Birth of Johnson — His Parents — Anecdotes of His Childhood — Touched by Queen Anne for the King's Evil — School Days — Reading at Home — Matriculation at Oxford — His Melancholy — Reading at College — Resistance to College Discipline — Poverty and Pride — Withdrawal from Oxford — Death of His Father — Life at Birmingham — Marriage to Mrs. Porter — Johnson's Academy at Edial.

SAMUEL JOHNSON was born at Lichfield, in Staffordshire, on the 18th of September, 1709; and his initiation into the Christian church was not delayed; for his baptism is recorded, in the register of St. Mary's parish in that city, to have been performed on the day of his birth. His father is there styled *Gentleman*, a circumstance of which an ignorant panegyrist has praised him for not being proud; when the truth is, that the appellation of *Gentleman*, though now lost in the indiscriminate assumption of *Esquire*, was commonly taken by those who could not boast of gentility. His father was Michael Johnson, a native of Derbyshire, of obscure extraction, who settled in Lichfield as a bookseller and stationer. His mother was Sarah Ford, descended of an ancient race of substantial yeomanry in Warwickshire. They were well advanced in years when they married, and never had more than two children, both sons; Samuel, their firstborn, who lived to be the illustrious character whose various excellence I am to endeavor to record, and Nathaniel, who died in his twenty-fifth year.

Of the power of his memory, for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible, the following early instance was told me in his presence at Lichfield, in 1776, by

his step-daughter, Mrs. Lucy Porter, as related to her by his mother. When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the common prayer-book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, "Sam, you must get this by heart." She went upstairs, leaving him to study it: but by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. "What's the matter?" said she. "I can say it," he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice.

Young Johnson had the misfortune to be much afflicted with the scrofula, or king's-evil, which disfigured a countenance naturally well formed, and hurt his visual nerves so much, that he did not see at all with one of his eyes, though its appearance was little different from that of the other. There is amongst his prayers, one inscribed *When my EYE was restored to its use*, which ascertains a defect that many of his friends knew he had, though I never perceived it. I supposed him to be only near-sighted; and indeed I must observe, that in no other respect could I discern any defect in his vision; on the contrary, the force of his attention and perceptive quickness made him see and distinguish all manner of objects, whether of nature or of art, with a nicety that is rarely to be found. When he and I were traveling in the Highlands of Scotland, and I pointed out to him a mountain which I observed resembled a cone, he corrected my inaccuracy, by showing me, that it was indeed pointed at the top, but that one side of it was larger than the other. And the ladies with whom he was acquainted agree, that no man was more nicely and minutely critical in the elegance of female dress. When I found that he saw the romantic beauties of Islam, in Derbyshire, much better than I did, I told him that he resembled an able performer upon a bad instrument. How false and contemptible then are all the remarks which have been made to the prejudice either of his candor or of his philosophy, founded upon a supposition that he was almost blind. It has been said, that he contracted this grievous malady from his nurse. His mother, yielding to the superstitious notion, which, it is wonderful to think, prevailed so long in this

country, as to the virtue of the regal touch; a notion, which our kings encouraged, and to which a man of such enquiry and such judgment as Carte could give credit; carried him to London, where he was actually touched by Queen Anne. Mrs. Johnson indeed, as Mr. Hector informed me, acted by the advice of the celebrated Sir John Floyer, then a physician in Lichfield. Johnson used to talk of this very frankly; and Mrs. Piozzi has preserved his very picturesque description of the scene, as it remained upon his fancy. Being asked if he could remember Queen Anne, — “He had (he said) a confused, but somehow a sort of solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds, and a long black hood.” This touch, however, was without any effect.

After having resided for some time at the house of his uncle, Cornelius Ford, Johnson was, at the age of fifteen, removed to the school of Stourbridge, in Worcestershire, of which Mr. Wentworth was then master.

The two years which he spent at home, after his return from Stourbridge, he passed in what he thought idleness, and was scolded by his father for his want of steady application. He had no settled plan of life, nor looked forward at all, but merely lived from day to day. Yet he read a great deal in a desultory manner, without any scheme of study, as chance threw books in his way, and inclination directed him through them. He used to mention one curious instance, of his casual reading, when but a boy. Having imagined that his brother had hid some apples behind a large folio upon an upper shelf in his father’s shop, he climbed up to search for them. There were no apples; but the large folio proved to be Petrarch, whom he had seen mentioned, in some preface, as one of the restorers of learning. His curiosity having been thus excited, he sat down with avidity, and read a great part of the book. What he read during these two years, he told me, was not works of mere amusement, “not voyages and travels, but all literature, Sir, all ancient writers, all manly: though but little Greek, only some of Anacreon and Hesiod: but in this irregular manner (added he) I had looked into a great many books which were not commonly known at the Universities,

where they seldom read any books but what are put into their hands by their tutors; so that when I came to Oxford, Dr. Adams, now master of Pembroke College, told me, I was the best qualified for the University that he had ever known come there."

In estimating the progress of his mind during these two years, as well as in future periods of his life, we must not regard his own hasty confession of idleness; for we see, when he explains himself, that he was acquiring various stores; and, indeed he himself concluded the account with saying, "I would not have you think I was doing nothing then." He might, perhaps, have studied more assiduously; but it may be doubted, whether such a mind as his was not more enriched by roaming at large in the fields of literature, than if it had been confined to any single spot. The analogy between body and mind is very general, and the parallel will hold as to their food, as well as any other particular. The flesh of animals who feed excursively, is allowed to have a higher flavor than that of those who are cooped up. May there not be the same difference between men who read as their taste prompts, and men who are confined in cells and colleges to stated tasks?

That a man in Mr. Michael Johnson's circumstances should think of sending his son to the expensive University of Oxford, at his own charge, seems very improbable. The subject was too delicate to question Johnson upon; but I have been assured by Dr. Taylor, that the scheme never would have taken place, had not a gentleman of Shropshire, one of his schoolfellows, spontaneously undertaken to support him at Oxford, in the character of his companion: though, in fact, he never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman.

He, however, went to Oxford, and was entered a commoner of Pembroke College, on the 31st of October, 1728, being then in his nineteenth year.

The Reverend Dr. Adams, who afterwards presided over Pembroke College with universal esteem, told me he was present, and gave me some account of what passed on the night of Johnson's arrival at Oxford. On that evening, his



PEMBROKE COLLEGE, OXFORD



DR. JOHNSON'S SCHOOL
Edial, Lichfield, where David Garrick was a pupil

father, who had anxiously accompanied him, found means to have him introduced to Mr. Jorden, who was to be his tutor. His being put under any tutor, reminds us of what Wood says of Robert Burton, author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*, when elected student of Christ Church: "for form's sake, *though he wanted not a tutor*, he was put under the tuition of Dr. John Bancroft, afterwards Bishop of Oxon."

His father seemed very full of the merits of his son, and told the company he was a good scholar, and a poet, and wrote Latin verses. His figure and manner appeared strange to them; but he behaved modestly, and sat silent, till upon something which occurred in the course of conversation, he suddenly struck in and quoted Macrobius; and thus he gave the first impression of that more extensive reading in which he had indulged himself.

The "morbid melancholy," which was lurking in his constitution, and to which we may ascribe those particularities, and that aversion to regular life, which, at a very early period, marked his character, gathered such strength in his twentieth year, as to afflict him in a dreadful manner. While he was at Lichfield, in the college vacation of the year 1729, he felt himself overwhelmed with an horrible hypochondria, with perpetual irritation, fretfulness, and impatience; and with a dejection, gloom, and despair, which made existence misery. From this dismal malady he never afterwards was perfectly relieved; and all his labors, and all his enjoyments, were but temporary interruptions of its baleful influence. How wonderful, how unsearchable are the ways of God! Johnson, who was blest with all the powers of genius and understanding in a degree far above the ordinary state of human nature, was at the same time visited with a disorder so afflictive, that they who know it by dire experience, will not envy his exalted endowments. That it was, in some degree, occasioned by a defect in his nervous system, that inexplicable part of our frame, appears highly probable. He told Mr. Paradise that he was sometimes so languid and inefficient, that he could not distinguish the hour upon the town-clock.

It is a common effect of low spirits or melancholy, to make

those who are afflicted with it imagine that they are actually suffering those evils which happen to be most strongly presented to their minds. Some have fancied themselves to be deprived of the use of their limbs, some to labor under acute diseases, others to be in extreme poverty; when, in truth, there was not the least reality in any of the suppositions; so that when the vapors were dispelled, they were convinced of the delusion. To Johnson, whose supreme enjoyment was the exercise of his reason, the disturbance or obscuration of that faculty was the evil most to be dreaded. Insanity, therefore, was the object of his most dismal apprehension; and he fancied himself seized by it, or approaching to it, at the very time he was giving proofs of a more than ordinary soundness and vigor of judgment. That his own diseased imagination should have so far deceived him, is strange; but it is stranger still that some of his friends should have given credit to his groundless opinion, when they had such undoubted proofs that it was totally fallacious; though it is by no means surprising that those who wish to depreciate him, should, since his death, have laid hold of this circumstance, and insisted upon it with very unfair aggravation.

The particular course of his reading while at Oxford, and during the time of vacation which he passed at home, cannot be traced. Enough has been said of his irregular mode of study. He told me, that from his earliest years he loved to read poetry, but hardly ever read any poem to an end; that he read Shakespeare at a period so early, that the speech of the Ghost in Hamlet terrified him when he was alone; that Horace's Odes were the compositions in which he took most delight, and it was long before he liked his Epistles and Satires. He told me what he read *solidly* at Oxford was Greek; not the Grecian historians, but Homer and Euripides, and now and then a little Epigram; that the study of which he was the most fond was Metaphysics, but he had not read much, even in that way. I always thought that he did himself injustice in his account of what he had read, and that he must have been speaking with reference to the vast portion of study which is possible, and to which a few scholars in the

whole history of literature have attained; for when I once asked him whether a person whose name I have now forgotten, studied hard, he answered, "No, Sir. I do not believe he studied hard. I never knew a man who studied hard. I conclude, indeed, from the effects, that some men have studied hard, as Bentley and Clarke." Trying him by that criterion upon which he formed his judgment of others, we may be absolutely certain, both from his writings and his conversation, that his reading was very extensive. Dr. Adam Smith, than whom few were better judges on this subject, once observed to me, that "Johnson knew more books than any man alive." He had a peculiar facility in seizing at once what was valuable in any book, without submitting to the labor of perusing it from beginning to end. He had, from the irritability of his constitution, at all times, an impatience and hurry when he either read or wrote. A certain apprehension, arising from novelty, made him write his first exercise at College twice over; but he never took that trouble with any other composition: and we shall see that his most excellent works were struck off at a heat, with rapid exertion.

Dr. Adams told me that Johnson, while he was at Pembroke College, "was caressed and loved by all about him, was a gay and frolicsome fellow, and passed there the happiest part of his life." But this is a striking proof of the fallacy of appearances, and how little any of us know of the real internal state even of those whom we see most frequently; for the truth is, that he was then depressed by poverty, and irritated by disease. When I mentioned to him this account as given me by Dr. Adams, he said, "Ah, Sir, I was mad and violent. It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority."

The Bishop of Dromore observes in a letter to me, "The pleasure he took in vexing the tutors and fellows has been often mentioned. But I have heard him say, what ought to be recorded to the honor of the present venerable master of that College, the Reverend William Adams, D.D., who was then very young, and one of the junior fellows; that the mild

but judicious expostulations of this worthy man, whose virtue awed him, and whose learning he revered, made him really ashamed of himself, 'though I fear (said he) I was too proud to own it.'

"I have heard from some of his contemporaries that he was generally seen lounging at the College gate, with a circle of young students round him, whom he was entertaining with wit, and keeping from their studies, if not spiriting them up to rebellion against the College discipline, which in his maturer years he so much extolled."

He was not, however, blind to what he thought the defects of his own college: and I have, from the information of Dr. Taylor, a very strong instance of that rigid honesty which he ever inflexibly preserved. Taylor had obtained his father's consent to be entered of Pembroke, that he might be with his schoolfellow Johnson, with whom, though some years older than himself, he was very intimate. This would have been a great comfort to Johnson. But he fairly told Taylor that he could not, in conscience, suffer him to enter where he knew he could not have an able tutor. He then made enquiry all round the University, and having found that Mr. Bateman, of Christ-Church, was the tutor of highest reputation, Taylor was entered of that College. Mr. Bateman's lectures were so excellent, that Johnson used to come and get them at second-hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme, that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that this humiliating circumstance was perceived by the Christ-Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation. How must we feel when we read such an anecdote of Samuel Johnson!

The *res angusta domi*¹ prevented him from having the advantage of a complete academical education. The friend to whom he had trusted for support had deceived him. His debts in College, though not great, were increasing; and his scanty remittances from Lichfield, which had all along been

Straitened circumstances. From Juvenal, *Satires*, iii, 164.

made with great difficulty, could be supplied no longer, his father having fallen into a state of insolvency. Compelled, therefore, by irresistible necessity, he left the College in autumn, 1731, without a degree, having been a member of it a little more than three years.

And now (I had almost said *poor*) Samuel Johnson returned to his native city, destitute, and not knowing how he should gain even a decent livelihood. His father's misfortunes in trade rendered him unable to support his son; and for some time there appeared no means by which he could maintain himself. In the December of this year his father died.

The state of poverty in which he died, appears from a note in one of Johnson's little diaries of the following year, which strongly displays his spirit and virtuous dignity of mind. "1732, July 15. — I laid by eleven guineas on this day, when I received twenty pounds, being all that I have reason to hope for out of my father's effects, previous to the death of my mother; an event which I pray God may be very remote. I now therefore see that I must make my own fortune. Meanwhile, let me take care that the powers of my mind be not debilitated by poverty, and that indigence do not force me into any criminal act."

Being now again totally unoccupied, he was invited by Mr. Hector to pass some time with him at Birmingham, as his guest, at the house of Mr. Warren, with whom Mr. Hector lodged and boarded. Mr. Warren was the first established bookseller in Birmingham, and was very attentive to Johnson, who he soon found could be of much service to him in his trade, by his knowledge of literature; and he even obtained the assistance of his pen in furnishing some numbers of a periodical Essay printed in the newspaper, of which Warren was the proprietor. After very diligent enquiry, I have not been able to recover those early specimens of that particular mode of writing by which Johnson afterwards so greatly distinguished himself.

He continued to live as Mr. Hector's guest for about six months, and then hired lodgings in another part of the town, finding himself as well situated at Birmingham as he supposed

he could be anywhere, while he had no settled plan of life, and very scanty means of subsistence. He made some valuable acquaintances there, amongst whom were Mr. Porter, a mercer, whose widow he afterwards married, and Mr. Taylor, who by his ingenuity in mechanical inventions, and his success in trade, acquired an immense fortune. But the comfort of being near Mr. Hector, his old school-fellow and intimate friend, was Johnson's chief inducement to continue here. Miss Porter told me, that when he was first introduced to her mother, his appearance was very forbidding: he was then lean and lank, so that his immense structure of bones was hideously striking to the eye, and the scars of the scrofula were deeply visible. He also wore his hair, which was straight and stiff, and separated behind: and he often had, seemingly, convulsive starts and odd gesticulations, which tended to excite at once surprise and ridicule. Mrs. Porter was so much engaged by his conversation that she overlooked all these external disadvantages, and said to her daughter, "This is the most sensible man that I ever saw in my life."

Though Mrs. Porter was double the age of Johnson, and her person and manner, as described to me by the late Mr. Garrick, were by no means pleasing to others, she must have had a superiority of understanding and talents, as she certainly inspired him with a more than ordinary passion; and she having signified her willingness to accept of his hand, he went to Lichfield to ask his mother's consent to the marriage; which he could not but be conscious was a very imprudent scheme, both on account of their disparity of years, and her want of fortune. But Mrs. Johnson knew too well the ardor of her son's temper, and was too tender a parent to oppose his inclinations.

I know not for what reason the marriage ceremony was not performed at Birmingham; but a resolution was taken that it should be at Derby, for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback, I suppose in very good humor. But though Mr. Topham Beauclerk used archly to mention Johnson's having told him with much gravity, "Sir, it was a love marriage on both sides," I have had from my illustrious

friend the following curious account of their journey to church upon the nuptial morn:—"Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, Sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me: and, when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears."

This, it must be allowed, was a singular beginning of conubial felicity; but there is no doubt that Johnson, though he thus showed a manly firmness, proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs. Johnson's life: and in his "Prayers and Meditations," we find very remarkable evidence that his regard and fondness for her never ceased, even after her death.

He now set up a private academy, for which purpose he hired a large house, well situated near his native city. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1736, there is the following advertisement: "At Edial, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire, young gentlemen are boarded and taught the Latin and Greek Languages, by Samuel Johnson." But the only pupils that were put under his care were the celebrated David Garrick and his brother George, and a Mr. Offely, a young gentleman of good fortune who died early. As yet, his name had nothing of that celebrity which afterwards commanded the highest attention and respect of mankind. Had such an advertisement appeared after the publication of his *London*, or his *Rambler*, or his *Dictionary*, how would it have burst upon the world! with what eagerness would the great and the wealthy have embraced an opportunity of putting their sons under the learned tuition of Samuel Johnson. The truth, however, is, that he was not so well qualified for being a teacher of elements, and a conductor in learning by regular gradations, as men of inferior powers of mind. His own acquisitions had

been made by fits and starts, by violent irruptions into the regions of knowledge; and it could not be expected that his impatience would be subdued, and his impetuosity restrained, so as to fit him for a quiet guide to novices. The art of communicating instruction, of whatever kind, is much to be valued; and I have ever thought that those who devote themselves to this employment, and do their duty with diligence and success, are entitled to very high respect from the community, as Johnson himself often maintained. Yet I am of opinion, that the greatest abilities are not only not required for this office, but render a man less fit for it.

Johnson was not more satisfied with his situation as the master of an academy, than with that of the usher of a school; we need not wonder, therefore, that he did not keep his academy above a year and a half. From Mr. Garrick's account he did not appear to have been profoundly revered by his pupils. His oddities of manner, and uncouth gesticulations, could not but be the subject of merriment to them; and in particular, the young rogues used to listen at the door and peep through the key-hole, that they might turn into ridicule his tumultuous and awkward fondness for Mrs. Johnson, whom he used to name by the familiar appellation of *Tetty* or *Tetsy*, which, like *Betty* or *Betsy*, is provincially used as a contraction for *Elizabeth*, her Christian name, but which to us seems ludicrous, when applied to a woman of her age and appearance. Mr. Garrick described her to me as very fat, with a bosom of more than ordinary protuberance, with swelled cheeks, of a florid red, produced by thick painting, and increased by the liberal use of cordials; flaring and fantastic in her dress, and affected both in her speech and her general behavior. I have seen Garrick exhibit her, by his exquisite talent of mimicry, so as to excite the heartiest bursts of laughter; but he, probably, as is the case in all such representations, considerably aggravated the picture.

CHAPTER II (1737-1748)

EARLY CAREER OF JOHNSON IN LONDON

Journey to London with Garrick — Kindness of Hervey — The *Gentleman's Magazine* — Writing of the Debates of Parliament — Publication of *London* — Kindly Interest of Pope — His Letter to Richardson — Physical Eccentricities of Johnson — A Possible Explanation — Johnson's Filial Kindness — The Biography of Richard Savage — The Prologue for Garrick's Theatre — The Prospectus for the *Dictionary* Addressed to Lord Chesterfield — Johnson's Methods of Work — His Helpers.

JOHNSON now thought of trying his fortune in London, the great field of genius and exertion, where talents of every kind have the fullest scope, and the highest encouragement. It is a memorable circumstance that his pupil David Garrick went thither at the same time, with intent to complete his education, and follow the profession of the law, from which he was soon diverted by his decided preference for the stage.

How he employed himself upon his first coming to London is not particularly known. He had a little money when he came to town, and he knew how he could live in the cheapest manner. His first lodgings were at the house of Mr. Norris, a staymaker, in Exeter-street, adjoining Catharine-street, in the Strand. "I dined (said he) very well for eight-pence, with very good company, at the Pine-Apple in New-street, just by. Several of them had traveled. They expected to meet every day; but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for six-pence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny; so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest, for they gave the waiter nothing."

Amidst this cold obscurity, there was one brilliant circumstance to cheer him; he was well acquainted with Mr. Henry Hervey, one of the branches of the noble family of that

name, who had been quartered at Lichfield as an officer of the army, and had at this time a house in London, where Johnson was frequently entertained, and had an opportunity of meeting genteel company. Not very long before his death, he mentioned this, among other particulars of his life, which he was kindly communicating to me; and he described this early friend "Harry Hervey," thus: "He was a vicious man, but very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him."

The *Gentleman's Magazine*, begun and carried on by Mr. Edward Cave, under the name of Sylvanus Urban, had attracted the notice and esteem of Johnson, in an eminent degree, before he came to London as an adventurer in literature. He told me, that when he first saw St. John's Gate, the place where that deservedly popular miscellany was originally printed, he "beheld it with reverence." I suppose, indeed, that every young author has had the same kind of feeling for the magazine or periodical publication which has first entertained him, and in which he has first had an opportunity to see himself in print, without the risk of exposing his name. I myself recollect such impressions from *The Scots Magazine*, which was begun at Edinburgh in the year 1739, and has been ever conducted with judgment, accuracy, and propriety. I yet cannot help thinking of it with an affectionate regard. Johnson has dignified the *Gentleman's Magazine*, by the importance with which he invests the life of Cave; but he has given it still greater lustre by the various admirable Essays which he wrote for it.

It appears that he was now enlisted by Mr. Cave as a regular coadjutor in his magazine, by which he probably obtained a tolerable livelihood. At what time, or by what means, he had acquired a competent knowledge both of French and Italian, I do not know; but he was so well skilled in them, as to be sufficiently qualified for a translator. That part of his labor which consisted in emendation and improvement of the productions of other contributors, like that employed in leveling ground, can be perceived only by those who had an opportunity of comparing the original with the

altered copy. What we certainly know to have been done by him in this way, was the Debates in both houses of Parliament, under the name of *The Senate of Lilliput*, sometimes with feigned denominations of the several speakers, sometimes with denominations formed of the letters of their real names, in the manner of what is called anagram, so that they might easily be deciphered. Parliament then kept the press in a kind of mysterious awe, which made it necessary to have recourse to such devices. In our time it has acquired an unrestrained freedom, so that the people in all parts of the kingdom have a fair, open, and exact report of the actual proceedings of their representatives and legislators, which in our constitution is highly to be valued; though, unquestionably, there has of late been too much reason to complain of the petulance with which obscure scribblers have presumed to treat men of the most respectable character and situation.

The debates in Parliament, which were brought home and digested by Guthrie, whose memory, though surpassed by others who have since followed him in the same department, was yet very quick and tenacious, were sent by Cave to Johnson for his revision; and, after some time, when Guthrie had attained to greater variety of employment, and the speeches were more and more enriched by the accession of Johnson's genius, it was resolved that he should do the whole himself, from the scanty notes furnished by persons employed to attend in both houses of Parliament. Sometimes, however, as he himself told me, he had nothing more communicated to him than the names of the several speakers, and the part which they had taken in the debate.

But what first displayed his transcendent powers, and "gave the world assurance of the man," was his *London, a Poem, in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal*; which came out in May this year, and burst forth with a splendor, the rays of which will for ever encircle his name.

To us who have long known the manly force, bold spirit, and masterly versification of this poem, it is a matter of curiosity to observe the diffidence with which its author

brought it forward into public notice, while he is so cautious as not to avow it to be his own production; and with what humility he offers to allow the printer to "alter any stroke of satire which he might dislike." That any such alteration was made, we do not know. If we did, we could not but feel an indignant regret; but how painful is it to see that a writer of such vigorous powers of mind was actually in such distress, that the small profit which so short a poem, however excellent, could yield, was courted as a "relief."

Johnson's *London* was published in May, 1738; and it is remarkable, that it came out on the same morning with Pope's satire, entitled *1738*; so that England had at once its Juvenal and Horace as poetical monitors. The Reverend Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, to whom I am indebted for some obliging communications, was then a student at Oxford, and remembers well the effect which *London* produced. Everybody was delighted with it; and there being no name to it, the first buzz of the literary circle was, "here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope." And it is recorded in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of that year, that it "got to the second edition in the course of a week."

Pope, who then filled the poetical throne without a rival, it may reasonably be presumed, must have been particularly struck by the sudden appearance of such a poet; and, to his credit, let it be remembered, that his feelings and conduct on the occasion were candid and liberal. He requested Mr. Richardson, son of the painter, to endeavor to find out who this new author was. Mr. Richardson, after some inquiry, having informed him that he had discovered only that his name was Johnson, and that he was some obscure man, Pope said, "He will soon be *déterré*.¹" We shall presently see, from a note written by Pope, that he was himself afterwards more successful in his inquiries than his friend.

As Mr. Pope's note concerning Johnson, alluded to in a former page, refers both to his *London*, and his *Marmor Norfolciense*, I have deferred inserting it till now. I am indebted for it to Dr. Percy, the Bishop of Dromor, who per-

¹ Unearthed.

mitted me to copy it from the original in his possession. It was presented to his Lordship by Sir Joshua Reynolds, to whom it was given by the son of Mr. Richardson the painter, the person to whom it is addressed. I have transcribed it with minute exactness, that the peculiar mode of writing, and imperfect spelling of that celebrated poet, may be exhibited to the curious in literature. It justifies Swift's epithet of "paper-sparing Pope," for it is written on a slip no larger than a common message-card, and was sent to Mr. Richardson, along with the imitation of Juvenal.

"This is imitated by one Johnson who put in for a Public-school in Shropshire, but was disappointed. He has an infirmity of the convulsive kind, that attacks him sometimes, so as to make Him a sad Spectacle. Mr P. from the Merit of This Work which was all the knowledge he had of Him endeavor'd to serve Him without his own application; & wrote to my L^d. gore, but he did not succeed. Mr. Johnson published afterw^{ds}. another Poem in Latin with Notes the whole very Humorous call'd the Norfolk Prophecy.

"P."

Johnson had been told of this note; and Sir Joshua Reynolds informed him of the compliment which it contained, but, from delicacy, avoided showing him the paper itself. When Sir Joshua observed to Johnson that he seemed very desirous to see Pope's note, he answered, "Who would not be proud to have such a man as Pope so solicitous in enquiring about him?"

The infirmity to which Mr. Pope alludes, appeared to me also, as I have elsewhere observed, to be of the convulsive kind, and of the nature of that distemper called St. Vitus's dance; and in this opinion I am confirmed by the description which Sydenham gives of that disease. "This disorder is a kind of convulsion. It manifests itself by halting or unsteadiness of one of the legs, which the patient draws after him like an idiot. If the hand of the same side be applied to the breast, or any other part of the body, he cannot keep it a moment in the same posture, but it will be drawn into a different one by a convulsion, notwithstanding all his efforts

to the contrary." Sir Joshua Reynolds, however, was of a different opinion, and favored me with the following paper:

"Those motions or tricks of Dr. Johnson are improperly called convulsions. He could sit motionless, when he was told so to do, as well as any other man. My opinion is, that it proceeded from a habit which he had indulged himself in, of accompanying his thoughts with certain untoward actions, and those actions always appeared to me as if they were meant to reprobate some part of his past conduct. Whenever he was not engaged in conversation, such thoughts were sure to rush into his mind; and, for this reason, any company, any employment whatever, he preferred to being alone. The great business of his life (he said) was to escape from himself; this disposition he considered as the disease of his mind, which nothing cured but company.

"One instance of his absence of mind and particularity, as it is characteristic of the man, may be worth relating. When he and I took a journey together into the West, we visited the late Mr. Banks, of Dorsetshire; the conversation turning upon pictures, which Johnson could not well see, he retired to a corner of the room, stretching out his right leg as far as he could reach before him, then bringing up his left leg, and stretching his right still further on. The old gentleman observing him, went up to him, and in a very courteous manner assured him, though it was not a new house, the flooring was perfectly safe. The Doctor started out of his reverie like a person waked out of his sleep, but spoke not a word."

His circumstances were at this time embarrassed; yet his affection for his mother was so warm, and so liberal, that he took upon himself a debt of hers, which, though small in itself, was then considerable to him. This appears from the following letter which he wrote to Mr. Levett, of Lichfield, the original of which lies now before me.

"To Mr. Levett, in Lichfield.

"Sir,

December 1, 1743.

"I am extremely sorry that we have encroached so much upon your forbearance with respect to the interest, which a

great perplexity of affairs hindered me from thinking of with that attention that I ought, and which I am not immediately able to remit to you, but will pay it (I think twelve pounds,) in two months. I look upon this, and on the future interest of that mortgage, as my own debt; and beg that you will be pleased to give me directions how to pay it, and not mention it to my dear mother. If it be necessary to pay this in less time, I believe I can do it; but I take two months for certainty, and beg an answer whether you can allow me so much time. I think myself very much obliged to your forbearance, and shall esteem it a great happiness to be able to serve you. I have great opportunities of dispersing anything that you may think it proper to make public. I will give a note for the money, payable at the time mentioned, to any one here that you shall appoint. I am, Sir,

“Your most obedient

“And most humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

It does not appear that he wrote anything in 1744 for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, but the Preface. His life of Barretier was now re-published in a pamphlet by itself. But he produced one work this year, fully sufficient to maintain the high reputation which he had acquired. This was *The Life of Richard Savage*; a man of whom it is difficult to speak impartially, without wondering that he was for some time the intimate companion of Johnson; for his character was marked by profligacy, insolence, and ingratitude: yet, as he undoubtedly had a warm and vigorous, though unregulated mind, had seen life in all its varieties, and been much in the company of the statesmen and wits of his time, he could communicate to Johnson an abundant supply of such materials as his philosophical curiosity most eagerly desired; and as Savage's misfortunes and misconduct had reduced him to the lowest state of wretchedness as a writer for bread, his visits to St. John's Gate naturally brought Johnson and him together.

It is melancholy to reflect, that Johnson and Savage were

sometimes in such extreme indigence, that they could not pay for a lodging; so that they have wandered together whole nights in the streets. Yet in these almost incredible scenes of distress, we may suppose that Savage mentioned many of the anecdotes with which Johnson afterwards enriched the life of his unhappy companion, and those of other poets.

I am afraid, however, that by associating with Savage, who was habituated to the dissipation and licentiousness of the town, Johnson, though his good principles remained steady, did not entirely preserve that conduct for which, in days of greater simplicity, he was remarked by his friend Mr. Hector; but was imperceptibly led into some indulgences which occasioned much distress to his virtuous mind.

In February, 1744, [the *Life*] came forth from the shop of Roberts, between whom and Johnson I have not traced any connection, except the casual one of this publication. In Johnson's *Life of Savage*, although it must be allowed that its moral is the reverse of — *Respicere exemplar vitae morumque jubebo*,¹ a very useful lesson is inculcated, to guard men of warm passions from a too free indulgence of them; and the various incidents are related in so clear and animated a manner, and illuminated throughout with so much philosophy, that it is one of the most interesting narratives in the English language. Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that upon his return from Italy he met with it in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed. The rapidity with which this work was composed is a wonderful circumstance. Johnson has been heard to say, "I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the *Life of Savage* at a sitting; but then I sat up all night."

It is remarkable, that in this biographical disquisition there

¹ I recommend that you regard this exemplary life, these exemplary habits.

appears a very strong symptom of Johnson's prejudice against players; a prejudice that may be attributed to the following causes: first, the imperfections of his organs, which were so defective that he was not susceptible of the fine impressions which theatrical excellence produces upon the generality of mankind; secondly, the cold rejection of his tragedy; and, lastly, the brilliant success of Garrick, who had been his pupil, who had come to London at the same time with him, not in a much more prosperous state than himself, and whose talents he undoubtedly rated low, compared with his own. His being outstripped by his pupil in the race of immediate fame, as well as of fortune, probably made him feel some indignation, as thinking that whatever might be Garrick's merits in his art, the reward was too great when compared with what the most successful efforts of literary labor could attain.

In 1746 it is probable that he was still employed upon his Shakespeare, which perhaps he laid aside for a time, upon account of the high expectations which were formed of Warburton's edition of that great poet. It is somewhat curious, that his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended in the years 1745 and 1746, those years which were marked by a civil war in Great Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the House of Stuart to the throne. That he had a tenderness for that unfortunate House is well known; and some may fancifully imagine, that a sympathetic anxiety impeded the exertion of his intellectual powers: but I am inclined to think, that he was, during this time, sketching the outlines of his great philological work.

This year his old pupil and friend, David Garrick, having become joint patentee and manager of Drury-lane theatre, Johnson honored his opening of it with a Prologue, which for just and manly dramatic criticism on the whole range of the English stage, as well as for the poetical excellence, is unrivalled. Like the celebrated Epilogue to the *Distressed Mother*, it was, during the season, often called for by the audience. The most striking and brilliant passages of it have been so often repeated, and are so well recollected by

all the lovers of the drama, and of poetry, that it would be superfluous to point them out. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December this year, he inserted an *Ode on Winter*, which is, I think, an admirable specimen of his genius for lyric poetry.

But the year 1747 is distinguished as the epoch, when Johnson's arduous and important work, his *Dictionary of the English Language*, was announced to the world, by the publication of its *Plan or Prospectus*.

How long this immense undertaking had been the object of his contemplation, I do not know. I once asked him by what means he had attained to that astonishing knowledge of our language, by which he was enabled to realize a design of such extent and accumulated difficulty. He told me, that "it was not the effect of particular study; but that it had grown up in his mind insensibly." I have been informed by Mr. James Dodsley, that several years before this period, when Johnson was one day sitting in his brother Robert's shop, he heard his brother suggest to him, that a *Dictionary of the English Language* would be a work that would be well received by the public; that Johnson seemed at first to catch at the proposition, but, after a pause, said, in his abrupt decisive manner, "I believe I shall not undertake it." That he, however, had bestowed much thought upon the subject, before he published his *Plan*, is evident from the enlarged, clear, and accurate views which it exhibits; and we find him mentioning in that tract, that many of the writers whose testimonies were to be produced as authorities, were selected by Pope; which proves that he had been furnished, probably by Mr. Robert Dodsley, with whatever hints that eminent poet had contributed towards a great literary project, that had been the subject of important consideration in a former reign.

The booksellers who contracted with Johnson, single and unaided, for the execution of a work, which in other countries has not been effected but by the co-operating exertions of many, were Mr. Robert Dodsley, Mr. Charles Hitch, Mr. Andrew Millar, the two Messieurs Longman, and the two

Messieurs Knapton. The price stipulated was fifteen hundred and twenty-five pounds.

The *Plan* was addressed to Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield, then one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State; a nobleman who was very ambitious of literary distinction, and who, upon being informed of the design, had expressed himself in terms very favorable to its success. There is, perhaps, in everything of any consequence, a secret history which it would be amusing to know, could we have it authentically communicated. Johnson told me, "Sir, the way in which the *Plan* of my *Dictionary* came to be inscribed to Lord Chesterfield, was this: I had neglected to write it by the time appointed. Dodsley suggested a desire to have it addressed to Lord Chesterfield. I laid hold of this as a pretext for delay, that it might be better done, and let Dodsley have his desire. I said to my friend, Dr. Bathurst, 'Now if any good comes of my addressing to Lord Chesterfield, it will be ascribed to deep policy,' when, in fact, it was only a casual excuse for laziness."

It is worthy of observation, that the *Plan* has not only the substantial merit of comprehension, perspicuity, and precision, but that the language of it is unexceptionably excellent; it being altogether free from that inflation of style, and those uncommon but apt and energetic words, which in some of his writings have been censured, with more petulance than justice; and never was there a more dignified strain of compliment than that in which he courts the attention of one, who, he had been persuaded to believe, would be a respectable patron.

"With regard to questions of purity or propriety, (says he) I was once in doubt whether I should not attribute to myself too much in attempting to decide them, and whether my province was to extend beyond the proposition of the question, and the display of the suffrages on each side; but I have been since determined by your Lordship's opinion, to interpose my own judgment, and shall therefore endeavor to support what appears to me most consonant to grammar and reason. Ausonius thought that modesty forbade him to

plead inability for a task which Cæsar had judged him equal:

*Cur me posse negem, posse quod ille putat?*¹

And I may hope, my Lord, that since you, whose authority in our language is so generally acknowledged, have commissioned me to declare my own opinion, I shall be considered as exercising a kind of vicarious jurisdiction; and that the power which might have been denied to my own claim, will be readily allowed me as the delegate of your Lordship."

This passage proves, that Johnson's addressing his *Plan* to Lord Chesterfield was not merely in consequence of the result of a report by means of Dodsley, that the Earl favored the design; but that there had been a particular communication with his Lordship concerning it. Dr. Taylor told me, that Johnson sent his *Plan* to him in manuscript, for his perusal; and that when it was lying upon his table, Mr. William Whitehead happened to pay him a visit, and being shown it, was highly pleased with such parts of it as he had time to read, and begged to take it home with him, which he was allowed to do; that from him it got into the hands of a noble Lord, who carried it to Lord Chesterfield. When Taylor observed this might be an advantage, Johnson replied, "No, Sir, it would have come out with more bloom, if it had not been seen before by anybody."

Dr. Adams found him one day busy at his *Dictionary*, when the following dialogue ensued. — "Adams. This is a great work, Sir. How are you to get all the etymologies? Johnson. Why, Sir, here is a shelf with Junius, and Skinner, and others; and there is a Welsh gentleman who has published a collection of Welsh proverbs, who will help me with the Welsh. Adams. But, Sir, how can you do this in three years? Johnson. Sir, I have no doubt that I can do it in three years. Adams. But the French Academy, which consists of forty members, took forty years to compile their *Dictionary*. Johnson. Sir, thus it is. This is the proportion. Let me see; forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As

¹ Why should I deny I can do what he thinks I can do?

three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman." With so much ease and pleasantry could he talk of that prodigious labor which he had undertaken to execute.

The public has had, from another pen, a long detail of what had been done in this country by prior Lexicographers; and no doubt Johnson was wise to avail himself of them, so far as they went; but the learned yet judicious research of etymology, the various, yet accurate display of definition, and the rich collection of authorities, were reserved for the superior mind of our great philologist. For the mechanical part he employed, as he told me, six amanuenses; and let it be remembered by the natives of North-Britain, to whom he is supposed to have been so hostile, that five of them were of that country.

While the *Dictionary* was going forward, Johnson lived part of the time in Holborn, part in Gough-square, Fleet-street; and he had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. The words, partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations. The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the passages with a black lead pencil, the traces of which could easily be effaced. I have seen several of them, in which that trouble had not been taken; so that they were just as when used by the copyists. It is remarkable, that he was so attentive in the choice of the passages in which words were authorised, that one may read page after page of his *Dictionary* with improvement and pleasure; and it should not pass unobserved, that he has quoted no author whose writings had a tendency to hurt sound religion and morality.

The necessary expense of preparing a work of such magnitude for the press must have been a considerable deduction from the price stipulated to be paid for the copyright. I understand that nothing was allowed by the booksellers on that

account; and I remember his telling me, that a large portion of it having, by mistake, been written on both sides of the paper, so as to be inconvenient for the compositor, it cost him twenty pounds to have it transcribed upon one side only.

He is now to be considered as "tugging at his oar," as engaged in a steady continued course of occupation, sufficient to employ all his time for some years; and which was the best preventive of that constitutional melancholy which was ever lurking about him, ready to trouble his quiet. But his enlarged and lively mind could not be satisfied without more diversity of employment, and the pleasure of animated relaxation. He therefore not only exerted his talents in occasional composition, very different from Lexicography, but formed a club in Ivy-lane, Paternoster Row, with a view to enjoy literary discussion, and amuse his evening hours. The members associated with him in this little society were his beloved friend Dr. Richard Bathurst, Mr. Hawkesworth, afterwards well known by his writings, Mr. John Hawkins, an attorney, and a few others of different professions.

CHAPTER III (1749-1757)

THE PERIOD OF LITERARY ACTIVITY

Publication of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* — The Production of *Irene* — Johnson's Habits of Literary Composition — His Style — A Comparison with Addison — Death of Johnson's Wife — His Deep Affection for Her — Some of Johnson's Friends — Bennet Langton and Topham Beauclerk — Completion of the *Dictionary* — The Rejection of Lord Chesterfield's Patronage — Johnson's Letter to Chesterfield — Johnson's Definitions — His Prejudices Exhibited — Compensation for the *Dictionary* — Essays and Reviews on many Subjects — Proposals for an Edition of Shakespeare.

IN January, 1749, he published *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, being the *Tenth Satire* of Juvenal imitated. He, I believe, composed it the preceding year. Mrs. Johnson, for the sake of country air, had lodgings at Hampstead, to which he resorted occasionally, and there the greatest part, if not the whole, of his Imitation was written. The fervid rapidity with which it was produced is scarcely credible. I have heard him say, that he composed seventy lines of it in one day, without putting one of them on paper till they were finished. I remember when I once regretted to him that he had not given us more of Juvenal's *Satires*, he said, he probably should give more, for he had them all in his head; by which I understood, that he had the originals and correspondent allusions floating in his mind, which he could, when he pleased, embody and render permanent without much labor. Some of them, however, he observed were too gross for imitation.

The profits of a single poem, however excellent, appear to have been very small in the last reign, compared with what a publication of the same size has since been known to yield. I have mentioned upon Johnson's own authority, that for his *London* he had only ten guineas; and now, after his

fame was established, he got for his *Vanity of Human Wishes* but five guineas more, as is proved by an authentic document in my possession.

Garrick being now vested with theatrical power by being manager of Drury-lane theatre, he kindly and generously made use of it to bring out Johnson's tragedy, which had been long kept back for want of encouragement. But in this benevolent purpose he met with no small difficulty from the temper of Johnson, which could not brook that a drama which he had formed with much study, and had been obliged to keep more than the nine years of Horace, should be revised and altered at the pleasure of an actor. Yet Garrick knew well, that without some alterations it would not be fit for the stage. A violent dispute having ensued between them, Garrick applied to the Reverend Dr. Taylor to interpose. Johnson was at first very obstinate. "Sir, (said he) the fellow wants me to make Mohamet run mad, that he may have an opportunity of tossing his hands and kicking his heels." He was, however, at last, with difficulty, prevailed on to comply with Garrick's wishes, so as to allow of some changes; but still there were not enough.

Dr. Adams was present the first night of the representation of *Irene*, and gave me the following account: "Before the curtain drew up, there were catcalls whistling, which alarmed Johnson's friends. The Prologue, which was written by himself in a manly strain, soothed the audience, and the play went off tolerably, till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines, with the bow-string round her neck. The audience cried out '*Murder! Murder!*' She several times attempted to speak, but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive." This passage was afterwards struck out, and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it.

Notwithstanding all the support of such performers as Garrick, Barry, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Pritchard, and every advantage of dress and decoration, the tragedy of *Irene* did not please the public. Mr. Garrick's zeal carried it through for

nine nights, so that the author had his three nights' profits; and from a receipt signed by him, now in the hands of Mr. James Dodsley, it appears that his friend, Mr. Robert Dodsley, gave him one hundred pounds for the copy, with his usual reservation of the right of one edition.

On occasion of this play being brought upon the stage, Johnson had a fancy that as a dramatic author his dress should be more gay than what he ordinarily wore; he therefore appeared behind the scenes, and even in one of the side boxes, in a scarlet waistcoat, with rich gold lace, and a gold-laced hat. He humorously observed to Mr. Langton, "that when in that dress he could not treat people with the same ease as when in his usual plain clothes." Dress indeed, we must allow, has more effect even upon strong minds than one should suppose, without having had the experience of it. His necessary attendance while his play was in rehearsal, and during its performance, brought him acquainted with many of the performers of both sexes, which produced a more favorable opinion of their profession than he had harshly expressed in his *Life of Savage*. With some of them he kept up an acquaintance as long as he and they lived, and was ever ready to show them acts of kindness. He for a considerable time used to frequent the *Green-room*, and seemed to take delight in dissipating his gloom, by mixing in the sprightly chit-chat of the motley circle then to be found there.

In 1750 he came forth in the character for which he was eminently qualified, a majestic teacher of moral and religious wisdom. The vehicle which he chose was that of a periodical paper, which he knew had been, upon former occasions, employed with great success. The *Tatler*, *Spectator*, and *Guardian* were the last of the kind published in England, which had stood the test of a long trial; and such an interval had now elapsed since their publication, as made him justly think that, to many of his readers, this form of instruction would, in some degree, have the advantage of novelty.

The first paper of the *Rambler* was published on Tuesday the 20th of March, 1750; and its author was able to continue it, without interruption, every Tuesday and Saturday, till

Saturday the 17th of March, 1752, on which day it closed. This is a strong confirmation of the truth of a remark of his, which I have had occasion to quote elsewhere, that "a man may write at any time, if he will set himself doggedly to it;" for, notwithstanding his constitutional indolence, his depression of spirits, and his labor in carrying on his Dictionary, he answered the stated calls of the press twice a week from the stores of his mind, during all that time; having received no assistance, except four billets in No. 10, by Miss Mulso, now Mrs. Chapone; No. 30, by Mrs. Catharine Talbot; No. 97, by Mr. Samuel Richardson, whom he describes in an introductory note as "An author who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue;" and Numbers 44 and 100, by Mrs. Elizabeth Carter.

Posterity will be astonished when they are told, upon the authority of Johnson himself, that many of these discourses, which we should suppose had been labored with all the slow attention of literary leisure, were written in haste as the moment pressed, without even being read over by him before they were printed. It can be accounted for only in this way; that by reading and meditation, and a very close inspection of life, he had accumulated a great fund of miscellaneous knowledge, which, by a peculiar promptitude of mind, was ever ready at his call, and which he had constantly accustomed himself to clothe in the most apt and energetic expression. Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked him by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him, that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and in every company; to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it in; and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expression to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him.

Johnson told me, with an amiable fondness, a little pleasing circumstance relative to this work. Mrs. Johnson, in whose judgment and taste he had great confidence, said to him,

after a few numbers of the *Rambler* had come out, "I thought very well of you before; but I did not imagine you could have written any thing equal to this." Distant praise, from whatever quarter, is not so delightful as that of a wife whom a man loves and esteems. Her approbation may be said to "come home to his *bosom*;" and being so near, its effect is most sensible and permanent.

The Rambler has increased in fame as in age. Soon after its first folio edition was concluded, it was published in six duodecimo volumes; and its author lived to see ten numerous editions of it in London, beside those of Ireland and Scotland.

The style of this work has been censured by some shallow critics as involved and turgid, and abounding with antiquated and hard words. So ill-founded is the first part of this objection, that I will challenge all who may honor this book with a perusal, to point out any English writer whose language conveys his meaning with equal force and perspicuity. It must, indeed, be allowed, that the structure of his sentences is expanded, and often has somewhat of the inversion of Latin; and that he delighted to express familiar thoughts in philosophical language; being in this the reverse of Socrates, who, it is said, reduced philosophy to the simplicity of common life. But let us attend to what he himself says in his concluding paper: "When common words were less pleasing to the ear, or less distinct in their signification, I have familiarized the terms of philosophy, by applying them to popular ideas." And, as to the second part of this objection, upon a late careful revision of the work, I can with confidence say, that it is amazing how few of those words, for which it has been unjustly characterized, are actually to be found in it; I am sure, not the proportion of one to each paper. This idle charge has been echoed from one babbler to another, who have confounded Johnson's *Essays* with Johnson's *Dictionary*; and because he thought it right in a *Lexicon* of our language to collect many words which had fallen into disuse, but were supported by great authorities, it has been imagined that all of these have been

interwoven into his own compositions. That some of them have been adopted by him unnecessarily, may, perhaps, be allowed; but, in general they are evidently an advantage, for without them his stately ideas would be confined and cramped. "He that thinks with more extent than another will want words of larger meaning."¹

It has of late been the fashion to compare the style of Addison and Johnson, and to depreciate, I think, very unjustly, the style of Addison as nerveless and feeble, because it has not the strength and energy of that of Johnson. Their prose may be balanced like the poetry of Dryden and Pope. Both are excellent, though in different ways. Addison writes with the ease of a gentleman. His readers fancy that a wise and accomplished companion is talking to them; so that he insinuates his sentiments and taste into their minds by an imperceptible influence. Johnson writes like a teacher. He dictates to his readers as if from an academical chair. They attend with awe and admiration; and his precepts are impressed upon them by his commanding eloquence. Addison's style, like a light wine, pleases everybody from the first. Johnson's, like a liquor of more body, seems too strong at first, but, by degrees, is highly relished; and such is the melody of his periods, so much do they captivate the ear, and seize upon the attention, that there is scarcely any writer, however inconsiderable, who does not aim, in some degree, at the same species of excellence. But let us not ungratefully undervalue that beautiful style, which has pleasingly conveyed to us much instruction and entertainment. Though comparatively weak, opposed to Johnson's Herculean vigor, let us not call it positively feeble. Let us remember the character of his style, as given by Johnson himself: "What he attempted he performed: he is *never feeble*, and he did not wish to be energetic; he is never rapid and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant

¹ *Idler*, No. 70.

but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

That there should be a suspension of his literary labors during a part of the year 1752, will not seem strange, when it is considered that soon after closing the *Rambler*, he suffered a loss which, there can be no doubt, affected him with the deepest distress. For on the 17th of March, O. S., his wife died. Why Sir John Hawkins should unwarrantably take upon him even to *suppose* that Johnson's fondness for her was *dissembled* (meaning simulated or assumed), and to assert, that if it was not the case, "it was a lesson he had learned by rote," I cannot conceive; unless it proceeded from a want of similar feelings in his own breast. To argue from her being much older than Johnson, or any other circumstances, that he really could not love her, is absurd; for love is not a subject of reasoning, but of feeling, and therefore there are no common principles upon which one can persuade another concerning it. Every man feels for himself, and knows how he is affected by particular qualities in the person he admires, the impressions of which are too minute and delicate to be substantiated in language.

The following very solemn and affecting prayer was found after Dr. Johnson's decease, by his servant, Mr. Francis Barber, who delivered it to my worthy friend the Reverend Mr. Strahan, Vicar of Islington, who at my earnest request has obligingly favored me with a copy of it, which he and I compared with the original. I present it to the world as an undoubted proof of a circumstance in the character of my illustrious friend, which, though some whose hard minds I never shall envy, may attack as superstitious, will I am sure endear him more to numbers of good men. I have an additional, and that a personal motive for presenting it, because it sanctions what I myself have always maintained and am fond to indulge:

"April 26, 1752, being after 12
at Night of the 25th.

"O Lord! Governor of heaven and earth, in whose hands are embodied and departed Spirits, if thou hast ordained the

Souls of the Dead to minister to the Living, and appointed my departed Wife to have care of me, grant that I may enjoy the good effects of her attention and ministration, whether exercised by appearance, impulses, dreams, or in any other manner agreeable to thy Government. Forgive my presumption, enlighten my ignorance, and however meaner agents are employed, grant me the blessed influences of thy holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*"

The circle of his friends, indeed, at this time was extensive and various, far beyond what has been generally imagined. To trace his acquaintance with each particular person, if it could be done, would be a task, of which the labor would not be repaid by the advantage. But exceptions are to be made; one of which must be a friend so eminent as Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was truly his *dulce decus*,¹ and with whom he maintained an uninterrupted intimacy to the last hour of his life. When Johnson lived in Castle-street, Cavendish-square, he used frequently to visit two ladies who lived opposite to him, Miss Cotterells, daughters of Admiral Cotterell. Reynolds used also to visit there, and thus they met. Mr. Reynolds, as I have observed above, had, from the first reading of his *Life of Savage*, conceived a very high admiration of Johnson's powers of writing. His conversation no less delighted him; and he cultivated his acquaintance with the laudable zeal of one who was ambitious of general improvement. Sir Joshua, indeed, was lucky enough at their very first meeting to make a remark, which was so much above the commonplace style of conversation, that Johnson at once perceived that Reynolds had the habit of thinking for himself. The ladies were regretting the death of a friend, to whom they owed great obligations; upon which Reynolds observed, "You have, however, the comfort of being relieved from a burden of gratitude." They were shocked a little at this alleviating suggestion, as too selfish; but Johnson defended it in his clear and forcible manner, and was much pleased with the *mind*, the fair view of human nature, which is exhibited, like some of the reflections of

¹ Pleasant adornment.

Rochefoucault. The consequence was, that he went home with Reynolds, and supped with him.

His acquaintance with Bennet Langton, Esq. of Langton, in Lincolnshire, another much valued friend, commenced soon after the conclusion of his *Rambler*; which that gentleman, then a youth, had read with so much admiration, that he came to London chiefly with a view of endeavoring to be introduced to its author. By a fortunate chance he happened to take lodgings in a house where Mr. Levett frequently visited; and having mentioned his wish to his landlady, she introduced him to Mr. Levett, who readily obtained Johnson's permission to bring Mr. Langton to him; as, indeed, Johnson, during the whole course of his life, had no shyness, real or affected, but was easy of access to all who were properly recommended, and even wished to see numbers at his *levee*, as his morning circle of company might, with strict propriety, be called. Mr. Langton was exceedingly surprised when the sage first appeared. He had not received the smallest intimation of his figure, dress, or manner. From perusing his writings, he fancied he should see a decent, well-drest, in short, a remarkably decorous philosopher. Instead of which, down from his bed-chamber, about noon, came, as newly risen, a huge, uncouth figure, with a little dark wig which scarcely covered his head, and his clothes hanging loose about him. But his conversation was so rich, so animated, and so forcible, and his religious and political notions so congenial with those in which Langton had been educated, that he conceived for him that veneration and attachment which he ever preserved. Johnson was not the less ready to love Mr. Langton, for his being of a very ancient family; for I have heard him say, with pleasure, "Langton, Sir, has a grant of free warren from Henry the Second; and Cardinal Stephen Langton, in King John's reign, was of this family."

Mr. Langton afterwards went to pursue his studies at Trinity College, Oxford, where he formed an acquaintance with his fellow-student, Mr. Topham Beauclerk; who, though their opinions and modes of life were so different, that it seemed utterly improbable that they should at all agree,

had so ardent a love of literature, so acute an understanding, such elegance of manners, and so well discerned the excellent qualities of Mr. Langton, a gentleman eminent not only for worth and learning, but for an inexhaustible fund of entertaining conversation, that they became intimate friends.

One night, when Beauclerk and Langton had supped at a tavern in London, and sat till about three in the morning, it came into their heads to go and knock up Johnson, and see if they could prevail on him to join them in a ramble. They rapped violently at the door of his chambers in the Temple, till at last he appeared in his shirt, with his little black wig on the top of his head, instead of a night-cap, and a poker in his hand, imagining, probably, that some ruffians were coming to attack him. When he discovered who they were, and was told their errand, he smiled, and with great good humor agreed to their proposal: "What, is it you, you dogs! I'll have a frisk with you." He was soon dressed, and they sallied forth together into Covent-Garden, where the green-grocers and fruiterers were beginning to arrange their hampers just come in from the country. Johnson made some attempts to help them; but the honest gardeners stared so hard at his figure and manner, and odd interference, that he soon saw his services were not relished. They then repaired to one of the neighboring taverns, and made a bowl of that liquor called *Bishop*, which Johnson had always liked: while in joyous contempt of sleep, from which he had been roused, he repeated the festive lines,

"Short, O short then be thy reign,
And give us to the world again!"

They did not stay long, but walked down to the Thames, took a boat, and rowed to Billingsgate. Beauclerk and Johnson were so well pleased with their amusement, that they resolved to persevere in dissipation for the rest of the day: but Langton deserted them, being engaged to breakfast with some young ladies. Johnson scolded him for "leaving his social friends to go and sit with a set of wretched

un-idea'd girls." Garrick being told of this ramble, said to him smartly, "I heard of your frolic t'other night. You'll be in the *Chronicle*." Upon which Johnson afterwards observed, "*He* durst not do such a thing. His *wife* would not let him!"

The *Dictionary*, we may believe, afforded Johnson full occupation this year. As it approached to its conclusion, he probably worked with redoubled vigor, as seamen increase their exertion and alacrity when they have a near prospect of their haven.

Lord Chesterfield, to whom Johnson had paid the high compliment of addressing to his Lordship the *Plan* of the *Dictionary*, had behaved to him in such a manner as to excite his contempt and indignation. The world has been for many years amused with a story confidently told, and as confidently repeated with additional circumstances, that a sudden disgust was taken by Johnson upon occasion of his having been one day kept long in waiting in his Lordship's antechamber, for which the reason assigned was, that he had company with him; and that at last, when the door opened, out walked Colley Cibber; and that Johnson was so violently provoked when he found for whom he had been so long excluded, that he went away in a passion, and never would return. I remember having mentioned this story to George Lord Lyttelton, who told me, he was very intimate with Lord Chesterfield; and holding it as a well-known truth, defended Lord Chesterfield by saying, that "Cibber, who had been introduced familiarly by the back-stairs, had probably not been there above ten minutes." It may seem strange even to entertain a doubt concerning a story so long and so widely current, and thus implicitly adopted, if not sanctioned, by the authority which I have mentioned; but Johnson himself assured me, that there was not the least foundation for it. He told me, that there never was any particular incident which produced a quarrel between Lord Chesterfield and him; but that his Lordship's continued neglect was the reason why he resolved to have no connection with him. When the *Dictionary* was on the eve of publication, Lord Chesterfield, who, it is

said, had flattered himself with expectations that Johnson would dedicate the work to him, attempted, in a courtly manner, to soothe and insinuate himself with the Sage, conscious, as it should seem, of the cold indifference with which he had treated its learned author; and further attempted to conciliate him, by writing two papers in *The World*, in recommendation of the work; and it must be confessed, that they contain some studied compliments, so finely turned, that if there had been no previous offence, it is probable that Johnson would have been highly delighted. Praise, in general, was pleasing to him; but by praise from a man of rank and elegant accomplishments, he was peculiarly gratified.

This courtly device failed of its effect. Johnson, who thought that "all was false and hollow," despised the honeyed words, and was even indignant that Lord Chesterfield should, for a moment, imagine, that he could be the dupe of such an artifice. His expression to me concerning Lord Chesterfield, upon this occasion, was, "Sir, after making great professions, he had, for many years, taken no notice of me; but when my *Dictionary* was coming out, he fell a scribbling in *The World* about it. Upon which, I wrote him a letter expressed in civil terms, but such as might show him that I did not mind what he said or wrote, and that I had done with him."

This is that celebrated letter of which so much has been said, and about which curiosity has been so long excited, without being gratified. I for many years solicited Johnson to favor me with a copy of it, that so excellent a composition might not be lost to posterity. He delayed from time to time to give it me; till at last in 1781, when we were on a visit at Mr. Dilly's, at Southhill, in Bedfordshire, he was pleased to dictate it to me from memory. He afterwards found among his papers a copy of it, which he had dictated to Mr. Baretti, with its title and corrections, in his own hand-writing. This he gave to Mr. Langton; adding that if it were to come into print, he wished it to be from that copy. By Mr. Langton's kindness, I am enabled to enrich my work with a perfect transcript of what the world has so eagerly desired to see.



DR. JOHNSON IN THE ANTEROOM OF LORD CHESTERFIELD
From the painting by Ward. Courtesy of the National Gallery, London



WHERE THE DICTIONARY WAS WRITTEN
No. 17 Gough Square, London. Photo by Ewing Galloway

"To The Right Honorable The Earl of Chesterfield.

"My Lord,

February 7, 1755.

"I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of the *World*, that two papers, in which my *Dictionary* is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honor, which, being very little accustomed to favors from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*;¹ — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my Lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favor. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice with which you have been pleased to take of my labors, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it.

¹ The conqueror of the earth's conqueror.

I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the Public should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

“Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favorer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

“My Lord,

“Your Lordship’s most humble,

“Most obedient servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“While this was the talk of the town, (says Dr. Adams, in a letter to me) I happened to visit Dr. Warburton, who finding that I was acquainted with Johnson, desired me earnestly to carry his compliments to him, and to tell him, that he honored him for his manly behavior in rejecting these condescensions of Lord Chesterfield, and for resenting the treatment he had received from him with a proper spirit. Johnson was visibly pleased with this compliment, for he had always a high opinion of Warburton. Indeed, the force of mind which appeared in this letter, was congenial with that which Warburton himself amply possessed.”

Johnson having now explicitly avowed his opinion of Lord Chesterfield, did not refrain from expressing himself concerning that nobleman with pointed freedom: “This man (said he) I thought had been a Lord among wits; but, I find, he is only a wit among Lords!”

Mr. Andrew Millar, bookseller in the Strand, took the principal charge of conducting the publication of Johnson’s *Dictionary*; and as the patience of the proprietors was repeatedly tried and almost exhausted, by their expecting that the work would be completed, within the time which Johnson had sanguinely supposed, the learned author was often goaded to dispatch, more especially as he had received all the copy money, by different drafts, a considerable time before he had finished his task. When the messenger who

carried the last sheet to Millar returned, Johnson asked him, "Well, what did he say?" — "Sir, (answered the messenger) he said, thank God I have done with him." "I am glad (replied Johnson, with a smile), that he thanks God for anything." It is remarkable, that those with whom Johnson chiefly contracted for his literary labors were Scotchmen, Mr. Millar and Mr. Strahan. Millar, though himself no great judge of literature, had good sense enough to have for his friends very able men, to give him their opinion and advice in the purchase of copyright; the consequence of which was his acquiring a very large fortune, with great liberality. Johnson said of him, "I respect Millar, Sir; he has raised the price of literature." The same praise may be justly given to Panckoucke, the eminent bookseller of Paris. Mr. Strahan's liberality, judgment, and success are well known.

The *Dictionary*, with a *Grammar and History of the English Language*, being now at length published, in two volumes folio, the world contemplated with wonder so stupendous a work achieved by one man, while other countries had thought such undertakings fit only for whole academies. Vast as his powers were, I cannot but think that his imagination deceived him, when he supposed that by constant application he might have performed the task in three years. Let the *Preface* be attentively perused, in which is given, in a clear, strong, and glowing style, a comprehensive, yet particular view of what he had done; and it will be evident, that the time he employed upon it was comparatively short. I am unwilling to swell my book with long quotations from what is in everybody's hands, and I believe there are few prose compositions in the English language that are read with more delight, or are more impressed upon the memory, than that preliminary discourse. One of its excellencies has always struck me with peculiar admiration; I mean the perspicuity with which he has expressed abstract scientific notions. As an instance of this, I shall quote the following sentence: "When the radical idea branches out into parallel ramifications how can a consecutive series be formed of senses in their own nature collateral?" We have here an

example of what has been often said, and I believe with justice, that there is for every thought a certain nice adaptation of words which none other could equal, and which, when a man has been so fortunate as to hit, he has attained, in that particular case, the perfection of language.

A few of his definitions must be admitted to be erroneous. Thus, *Windward* and *Leeward*, though directly of opposite meaning, are defined identically the same way; as to which inconsiderable specks it is enough to observe, that his *Preface* announces that he was aware there might be many such in so immense a work; nor was he at all disconcerted when an instance was pointed out to him. A lady once asked him how he came to define *Pastern* the *knee* of a horse: instead of making an elaborate defence, as she expected, he at once answered, "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance." His definition of *Network* has been often quoted with sportive malignity, as obscuring a thing in itself very plain. But to these frivolous censures no other answer is necessary than that with which we are furnished by his own *Preface*. "To explain, requires the use of terms less abstruse than that which is to be explained, and such terms cannot always be found. For as nothing can be proved but by supposing something intuitively known, and evident without proof, so nothing can be defined but by the use of words too plain to admit of definition. Sometimes easier words are changed into harder; as *burial* into *sepulture* or *interment*; *dry*, into *desiccative*; *dryness*, into *siccity* or *aridity*; *fit*, into *paroxysm*; for the *easiest* word, whatever it be, can never be translated into one more easy."

His introducing his own opinions, and even prejudices, under general definitions of words, while at the same time the original meaning of the words is not explained, as his *Tory*, *Whig*, *Pension*, *Oats*, *Excise*, and a few more, cannot be fully defended, and must be placed to the account of capricious and humorous indulgence. Talking to me upon this subject when we were at Ashbourne in 1777, he mentioned a still stronger instance of the predominance of his private feelings in the composition of this work, than any

now to be found in it. "You know, Sir, Lord Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word *Renegado*, after telling that it meant 'one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter,' I added, *Sometimes we say a GOWER*. Thus it went to the press: but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out."

Let it, however, be remembered, that this indulgence does not display itself only in sarcasm towards others, but sometimes in playful allusion to the notions commonly entertained of his own laborious task. Thus: "*Grub-street*, the name of a street in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, *dictionaries*, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called *Grub-street*." — "*Lexicographer*, a writer of dictionaries, a *harmless drudge*."

He had spent, during the progress of the work, the money for which he had contracted to write his *Dictionary*. We have seen that the reward of his labor was only fifteen hundred and seventy-five pounds; and when the expense of amanuenses and paper, and other articles, are deducted, his clear profit was very inconsiderable. I once said to him, "I am sorry, Sir, you did not get more for your *Dictionary*." His answer was, "I am sorry, too. But it was very well. The booksellers are generous, liberal-minded men." He, upon all occasions, did ample justice to their character in this respect. He considered them as the patrons of literature; and, indeed, although they have eventually been considerable gainers by his *Dictionary*, it is to them that we owe its having been undertaken and carried through at the risk of great expense, for they were not absolutely sure of being indemnified.

He engaged also to superintend and contribute largely to another monthly publication entitled *The Literary Magazine*, or *Universal Review*; the first number of which came out in May this year. What were his emoluments from this undertaking, and what other writers were employed in it, I have not discovered. He continued to write in it, with intermissions, till the fifteenth number; and I think that he never gave better proofs of the force, acuteness, and

vivacity of his mind, than in this miscellany, whether we consider his original essays, or his reviews of the works of others. The "Preliminary Address" to the public, is a proof how this great man could embellish, with the graces of superior composition, even so trite a thing as the plan of a magazine.

His original essays are, *An Introduction to the Political State of Great Britain; Remarks on the Militia Bill; Observations on his Britannic Majesty's Treaties with the Empress of Russia and the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel; Observations on the Present State of Affairs; and Memoirs of Frederick III, King of Prussia*. In all these he displays extensive political knowledge and sagacity, expressed with uncommon energy and perspicuity, without any of those words which he sometimes took a pleasure in adopting, in imitation of Sir Thomas Browne; of whose *Christian Morals* he this year gave an edition, with his "Life" prefixed to it, which is one of Johnson's best biographical performances.

His reviews are of the following books: Birch's *History of the Royal Society*; Murphy's *Gray's Inn Journal*; Warton's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Pope*, Vol. I. Hampton's *Translation of Polybius*; Blackwell's *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus*; Russel's *Natural History of Aleppo*; Sir Isaac Newton's *Arguments in Proof of a Deity*; Borlase's *History of the Isles of Scilly*; Holme's *Experiments on Bleaching*; Browne's *Christian Morals*; Hale's *On Distilling Sea-water, Ventilators in Ships, and Curing an Ill Taste in Milk*; Lucas's *Essays on Waters*; Keith's *Catalogue of the Scottish Bishops*; Browne's *History of Jamaica*; *Philosophical Transactions*, Vol. XLIX; Mrs. Lennox's *Translation of Sully's Memoirs*; * *Miscellanies* by Elizabeth Harrison; *Letter on the Case of Admiral Byng*; * *Appeal to the People concerning Admiral Byng*; * *Hanway's Eight Days' Journey, and Essay on Tea*; Evans' *Map and Account of the Middle Colonies in America*; *The Cadet, a Military Treatise*; *Some further Particulars in Relation to the Case of Admiral Byng*, by a Gentleman of Oxford; * *The Conduct of the Ministry relating to the present War impartially examined*; *A Free Inquiry into the Nature*

and Origin of Evil.* All these, from internal evidence, were written by Johnson: some of them I know he avowed, and have marked them with an *asterisk* accordingly.

Johnson's most exquisite critical essay in the *Literary Magazine*, and indeed anywhere, is his review of Soame Jenyns's *Inquiry into the Origin of Evil*. Jenyns was possessed of lively talents, and a style eminently pure and easy, and could very happily play with a light subject, either in prose or verse; but when he speculated on that most difficult and excruciating question, the origin of Evil, he "ventured far beyond his depth," and accordingly, was exposed by Johnson, both with acute argument and brilliant wit. I remember when the late Mr. Bicknell's humorous performance, entitled *The Musical Travels of Joel Collyer*, in which a slight attempt is made to ridicule Johnson, was ascribed to Soame Jenyns, "Ha! (said Johnson) I thought I had given *him* enough of it."

He this year resumed his scheme of giving an edition of Shakespeare with notes. He issued proposals of considerable length, in which he showed that he perfectly well knew what variety of research such an undertaking required; but his indolence prevented him from pursuing it with that diligence which alone can collect those scattered facts, that genius, however acute, penetrating, and luminous, cannot discover by its own force. It is remarkable, that at this time his fancied activity was for the moment so vigorous, that he promised his work should be published before Christmas, 1757. Yet nine years elapsed before it saw the light.

CHAPTER IV (1758-1762)

THE PENSIONING OF JOHNSON

Publication of *The Idler* — Death of Johnson's Mother — Johnson's Letters on This Subject — The Writing of *Rasselas* — The Excursion to Oxford — Johnson's Negro Servant, Francis Barber — The Accession of George III — Granting of a Pension to Johnson — A Defense of Johnson's Acceptance.

ON the fifteenth of April (1758) he began a new periodical paper entitled *The Idler*, which came out every Saturday in a weekly newspaper, called the *Universal Chronicle*, or *Weekly Gazette*, published by Newbery. These essays were continued till April 5, 1760. Of one hundred and three, their total number, twelve were contributed by his friends; of which, Numbers 33, 93, and 96, were written by Mr. Thomas Warton; No. 67 by Mr. Langton; and Nos. 76, 79, and 82, by Sir Joshua Reynolds; the concluding words of No. 82, "and pollute his canvas with deformity," being added by Johnson; as Sir Joshua informed me.

The Idler is evidently the work of the same mind which produced the *Rambler*, but has less body and more spirit, it has more variety of real life, and greater facility of language. He describes the miseries of idleness, with the lively sensations of one who has felt them; and in his private memorandums while engaged in it, we find "This year I hope to learn diligence." Many of these excellent essays were written as hastily as an ordinary letter. Mr. Langton remembers Johnson, when on a visit at Oxford, asking him one evening how long it was till the post went out; and on being told about half an hour, he exclaimed, "Then we shall do very well." He upon this instantly sat down and finished an *Idler*, which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr. Langton having signified a wish to read it, "Sir, (said he,) you shall not do more than I have done myself." He then folded it up, and sent it off.

In 1759, in the month of January, his mother died at the great age of ninety, an event which deeply affected him; not that "his mind had acquired no firmness by the contemplation of mortality;" but that his reverential affection for her was not abated by years, as indeed he retained all his tender feelings even to the latest period of his life. I have been told, that he regretted much his not having gone to visit his mother for several years previous to her death. But he was constantly engaged in literary labors which confined him to London and though he had not the comfort of seeing his aged parent he contributed to her support.

"To Mrs. Johnson, in Lichfield.

"Honored Madam,

"The account which Miss (Porter) gives me of your health, pierces my heart. God comfort, and preserve you, and save you, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

"I would have Miss read to you from time to time the Passion of our Saviour, and sometimes the sentences in the Communion Service, beginning — *Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

"I have just now read a physical book, which inclines me to think that a strong infusion of the bark would do you good. Do, dear mother, try it.

"Pray, send me your blessing, and forgive all that I have done amiss to you. And whatever you would have done, and what debts you would have paid first, or any thing else that you would direct, let Miss put it down; I shall endeavor to obey you.

"I have got twelve guineas to send you, but unhappily am at a loss how to send it to-night. If I cannot send it to-night, it will come by the next post.

"Pray, do not omit anything mentioned in this letter. God bless you for ever and ever.

"I am,

"Your dutiful Son,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Jan. 13, 1759."

"To Miss Porter, At Mrs. Johnson's, in Lichfield.

"My Dear Miss,

"I think myself obliged to you beyond all expression of gratitude for your care of my dear mother. God grant it may not be without success. Tell Kitty, that I shall never forget her tenderness for her mistress. Whatever you can do, continue to do. My heart is very full.

"I hope you received twelve guineas on Monday. I found a way of sending them by means of the Postmaster, after I had written my letter, and hope they came safe. I will send you more in a few days. God bless you all.

"I am, my dear,

"Your most obliged

"and most humble servant,

"Jan. 16, 1759."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Over the leaf is a letter to my mother."

"Dear Honored Mother,

"Your weakness afflicts me beyond what I am willing to communicate to you. I do not think you unfit to face death, but I know not how to bear the thought of losing you. Endeavor to do all you can for yourself. Eat as much as you can.

"I pray often for you; do you pray for me. — I have nothing to add to my last letter.

"I am, dear, dear Mother,

"Your dutiful Son,

"Jan. 16, 1759."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"To Mrs. Johnson, in Lichfield.

"Dear Honored Mother,

"I fear you are too ill for long letters; therefore I will only tell you, you have from me all the regard that can possibly subsist in the heart. I pray God to bless you for evermore for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

"Let Miss write to me every post, however short.

"I am, dear Mother,

"Your dutiful Son,

"Jan. 18, 1759."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"To Miss Porter, at Mrs. Johnson's in Lichfield.

"Dear Miss,

"I will, if it be possible, come down to you. God grant I may yet find my dear mother breathing and sensible. Do not tell her, lest I disappoint her. If I miss to write next post, I am on the road.

"I am, my dearest Miss,

"Your most humble servant,

"Jan. 20, 1759."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"On the other side."

"Dear Honored Mother,

"Neither your condition nor your character make it fit for me to say much. You have been the best mother, and I believe the best woman in the world. I thank you for your indulgence to me, and beg forgiveness of all that I have done ill, and all that I have omitted to do well. God grant you his Holy Spirit, and receive you to everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen. Lord Jesus receive your spirit. Amen.

"I am, dear, dear Mother,

"Your dutiful Son,

"Jan. 20, 1759."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"To Miss Porter, in Lichfield.

"You will conceive my sorrow for the loss of my mother, of the best mother. If she were to live again, surely I should behave better to her. But she is happy, and what is past is nothing to her; and for me, since I cannot repair my faults to her, I hope repentance will efface them. I return you and all those that have been good to her my sincerest thanks, and pray God to repay you all with infinite advantage. Write to me, and comfort me, dear child. I shall be glad likewise,

if Kitty will write to me. I shall send a bill of twenty pounds in a few days, which I thought to have brought to my mother; but God suffered it not. I have not power or composure to say much more. God bless you, and bless us all.

“I am, dear Miss,
“Your affectionate humble Servant,
“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“Jan. 23, 1759.”

Soon after this event, he wrote his *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, concerning the publication of which Sir John Hawkins guesses vaguely and idly, instead of having taken the trouble to inform himself with authentic precision. Not to trouble my readers with a repetition of the Knight's reveries, I have to mention, that the late Mr. Strahan the printer told me, that Johnson wrote it, that with the profits he might defray the expense of his mother's funeral, and pay some little debts which she had left. He told Sir Joshua Reynolds, that he composed it in the evenings of one week, sent it to the press in portions as it was written, and had never since read it over. Mr. Strahan, Mr. Johnston, and Mr. Dodsley, purchased it for a hundred pounds, but afterwards paid him twenty-five pounds more, when it came to a second edition.

Considering the large sums which have been received for compilations, and works requiring not much more genius than compilations, we cannot but wonder at the very low price which he was content to receive for this admirable performance; which, though he had written nothing else, would have rendered his name immortal in the world of literature. None of his writings has been so extensively diffused over Europe; for it has been translated into most, if not all, of the modern languages. This Tale, with all the charms of oriental imagery, and all the force and beauty of which the English language is capable, leads us through the most important scenes of human life, and shows us that this stage of our being is full of “vanity and vexation of spirit.” To those who look no further than the present life, or who maintain that

human nature has not fallen from the state in which it was created, the instruction of this sublime story will be of no avail. But they who think justly, and feel with strong sensibility, will listen with eagerness and admiration to its truth and wisdom. Voltaire's *Candide*, written to refute the system of Optimism, which it has accomplished with brilliant success, is wonderfully similar in its plan and conduct to Johnson's *Rasselas*; insomuch, that I have heard Johnson say, that if they had not been published so closely one after the other that there was not time for imitation, it would have been in vain to deny that the scheme of that which came latest was taken from the other. Though the proposition illustrated by both these works was the same, namely, that in our present state there is more evil than good, the intention of the writers was very different. Voltaire I am afraid, meant only by wanton profaneness to obtain a sportive victory over religion, and to discredit the belief of a superintending Providence: Johnson meant, by showing the unsatisfactory nature of things temporal, to direct the hopes of man to things eternal. *Rasselas*, as was observed to me by a very accomplished lady, may be considered as a more enlarged and more deeply philosophical discourse in prose, upon the interesting truth, which in his *Vanity of Human Wishes* he had so successfully enforced in verse.

The fund of thinking which this work contains is such, that almost every sentence of it may furnish a subject of long meditation. I am not satisfied if a year passes without my having read it through; and at every persual, my admiration of the mind which produced it is so highly raised, that I can scarcely believe that I had the honor of enjoying the intimacy of such a man.

He now refreshed himself by an excursion to Oxford, of which the following short characteristical notice, in his own words, is preserved: ". . . is now making tea for me. I have been in my gown ever since I came here. It was, at my first coming, quite new and handsome. I have swum thrice, which I had disused for many years. I have proposed to Vansittart climbing over the wall, but he has refused me,

and I have clapped my hands till they are sore, at Dr. King's speech."

His negro servant, Francis Barber, having left him, and been some time at sea, not pressed as has been supposed, but with his own consent, it appears from a letter to John Wilkes, Esq., from Dr. Smollett, that his master kindly interested himself in procuring his release from a state of life of which Johnson always expressed the utmost abhorrence. He said, "No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned." And at another time, "A man in a jail has more room, better food, and commonly better company." The letter was as follows:

"CHELSEA, *March 16, 1759.*

"*Dear Sir,*

"I am again your petitioner, in behalf of that great Cham of literature, Samuel Johnson. His black servant, whose name is Francis Barber, has been pressed on board the *Stag* Frigate, Captain Angel, and our lexicographer is in great distress. He says, the boy is a sickly lad, of a delicate frame, and particularly subject to a malady in his throat, which renders him very unfit for his Majesty's service. You know what matter of animosity the said Johnson has against you: and I dare say you desire no other opportunity of resenting it, than that of laying him under an obligation. He was humble enough to desire my assistance on this occasion, though he and I were never cater-cousins; and I gave him to understand that I would make application to my friend, Mr. Wilkes, who, perhaps, by his interest with Dr. Hay and Mr. Elliot, might be able to procure the discharge of his lacquey. It would be superfluous to say more on the subject, which I leave to your own consideration; but I cannot let slip this opportunity of declaring that I am, with the most inviolable esteem and attachment, dear Sir,

"Your affectionate obliged humble servant,

"T. SMOLLETT."

Mr. Wilkes, who upon all occasions has acted as a private gentleman with most polite liberality, applied to his friend Sir

George Hay, then one of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty; and Francis Barber was discharged, as he has told me, without any wish of his own. He found his old master in Chambers in the Inner Temple, and returned to his service.

In 1761 Johnson appears to have done little. He was still, no doubt, proceeding in his edition of Shakespeare; but what advances he made in it cannot be ascertained. He certainly was at this time not active; for, in his scrupulous examination of himself on Easter eve, he laments, in his too rigorous mode of censuring his own conduct, that his life, since the communion of the preceding Easter, had been "dissipated and useless." He, however, contributed this year the Preface to Rolt's *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*, in which he displays such a clear and comprehensive knowledge of the subject, as might lead the reader to think that its author had devoted all his life to it. I asked him, whether he knew much of Rolt, and of his work. "Sir, (said he) I never saw the man, and never read the book. The booksellers wanted a Preface to a *Dictionary of Trade and Commerce*. I knew very well what such a Dictionary should be, and I wrote a Preface accordingly." Rolt, who wrote a great deal for the booksellers, was, as Johnson told me, a singular character. Though not in the least acquainted with him, he used to say, "I am just come from Sam. Johnson." This was a sufficient specimen of his vanity and impudence. But he gave a more eminent proof of it in our sister kingdom, as Dr. Johnson informed me. When Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination* first came out, he did not put his name to the poem. Rolt went over to Dublin, published an edition of it, and put his own name to it. Upon the fame of this he lived for several months, being entertained at the best tables as the "the ingenious Mr. Rolt." His conversation indeed, did not discover much of the fire of a poet; but it was recollected, that both Addison and Thomson were equally dull till excited by wine. Akenside having been informed of this imposition, vindicated his right by publishing the poem with its real author's name.

The accession of George III to the throne of these kingdoms, opened a new and brighter prospect to men of literary merit, who had been honored with no mark of royal favor in the preceding reign. His present Majesty's education in this country, as well as his taste and beneficence, prompted him to be the patron of science and the arts; and early this year Johnson having been represented to him as a very learned and good man, without any certain provision, his Majesty was pleased to grant him a pension of three hundred pounds a year. The Earl of Bute, who was then Prime Minister, had the honor to announce this instance of his Sovereign's bounty, concerning which, many and various stories, all equally erroneous, have been propagated; maliciously representing it as a political bribe to Johnson, to desert his avowed principles, and become the tool of a government which he held to be founded in usurpation. I have taken care to have it in my power to refute them from the most authentic information. Lord Bute told me, that Mr. Wedderburne, now Lord Loughborough, was the person who first mentioned this subject to him. Lord Loughborough told me, that the pension was granted to Johnson solely as the reward of his literary merit, without any stipulation whatever, or even tacit understanding that he should write for administration. His Lordship added, that he was confident the political tracts which Johnson afterwards did write, as they were entirely consonant with his own opinions, would have been written by him, though no pension had been granted to him.

Mr. Thomas Sheridan and Mr. Murphy, who then lived a good deal both with him and Mr. Wedderburne, told me, that they previously talked with Johnson upon this matter, and that it was perfectly understood by all parties that the pension was merely honorary. Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that Johnson called on him after his Majesty's intention had been notified to him, and said he wished to consult his friends as to the propriety of his accepting this mark of the royal favor, after the definitions which he had given in his *Dictionary of pension and pensioners*. He said he should not have Sir Joshua's answer till next day, when he would call again, and

desired he might think of it. Sir Joshua answered that he was clear to give his opinion then, that there could be no objection to his receiving from the King a reward for literary merit; and that certainly the definitions in his *Dictionary* were not applicable to him. Johnson, it should seem, was satisfied, for he did not call again till he had accepted the pension, and had waited on Lord Bute to thank him. He then told Sir Joshua that Lord Bute said to him expressly, "It is not given you for anything you are to do, but for what you have done." His Lordship, he said, behaved in the handsomest manner. He repeated the words twice, that he might be sure Johnson heard them, and thus set his mind perfectly at ease. This nobleman, who has been so virulently abused, acted with great honor in this instance, and displayed a mind truly liberal. A minister of a more narrow and selfish disposition would have availed himself of such an opportunity to fix an implied obligation on a man of Johnson's powerful talents to give him his support.

But I shall not detain my readers longer by any words of my own, on a subject on which I am happily enabled, by the favor of the Earl of Bute, to present them with what Johnson himself wrote; his lordship having been pleased to communicate to me a copy of the following letter to his late father, which does great honor both to the writer, and to the noble person to whom it is addressed:

"To the Right Honorable The Earl of Bute.

"My Lord,

"When the bills were yesterday delivered to me by Mr. Wedderburne, I was informed by him of the future favors which his Majesty has, by your Lordship's recommendation, been induced to intend for me.

"Bounty always receives part of its value from the manner in which it is bestowed; your Lordship's kindness includes every circumstance that can gratify delicacy, or enforce obligation. You have conferred your favors on a man who has neither alliance nor interest, who has not merited them by services, nor courted them by officiousness; you

have spared him the shame of solicitation, and the anxiety of suspense.

“What has been thus elegantly given, will, I hope, not be reproachfully enjoyed; I shall endeavor to give your Lordship the only recompense which generosity desires, — the gratification of finding that your benefits are not improperly bestowed. I am, my Lord,

“Your Lordship’s most obliged,
“Most obedient, and most humble servant,
“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“*July 20, 1762.*”

CHAPTER V (1763)

BOSWELL'S MEMORABLE YEAR: THE MEETING WITH JOHNSON

Boswell's Plans for Meeting Johnson — Obstacles — The Quarrel with Sheridan — Boswell in Davies's Bookshop — Entry of Johnson — The Famous Meeting — Boswell Rebuked — Boswell Calls on Johnson — Remarks of Johnson on Madness — On Christopher Smart — On Garrick — At the Mitre Tavern — Johnson on Colley Cibber — On Gray — On Mallet — Dr. Goldsmith — Johnson and Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* — Johnson on Scotland — On Rhyme and Blank Verse — Johnson's Library — Johnson on Conventional Lies — On the Acquaintance of Young People — On the Hebrides — On a Boy at School — On Greek and Latin — On Preaching — On the Pleasures of Nature — Johnson Accompanies Boswell to Harwich — Johnson's Habits at the Table — The Parting of the Friends at Harwich.

THIS is to me a memorable year; for in it I had the happiness to obtain the acquaintance of that extraordinary man whose memoirs I am now writing; an acquaintance which I shall ever esteem as one of the most fortunate circumstances in my life. Though then but two-and-twenty, I had for several years read his works with delight and instruction, and had the highest reverence for their author, which had grown up in my fancy into a kind of mysterious veneration, by figuring to myself a state of solemn elevated abstraction, in which I supposed him to live in the immense metropolis of London. Mr. Gentleman, a native of Ireland, who passed some years in Scotland as a player, and as an instructor in the English language, a man whose talents and worth were depressed by misfortunes, had given me a representation of the figure and manner of *Dictionary* Johnson! as he was then generally called; and during my first visit to London, which was for three months in 1760, Mr. Derrick the poet, who was Gentleman's friend and countryman, flattered me with hopes that he would introduce me to Johnson, an honor of which I

was very ambitious. But he never found an opportunity; which made me doubt that he had promised to do what was not in his power; till Johnson some years afterwards told me, "Derrick, Sir, might very well have introduced you. I had a kindness for Derrick, and am sorry he is dead."

In the summer of 1761 Mr. Thomas Sheridan was at Edinburgh, and delivered lectures upon the English Language and Public Speaking to large and respectable audiences. I was often in his company, and heard him frequently expatiate upon Johnson's extraordinary knowledge, talents, and virtues, repeat his pointed sayings, describe his particularities, and boast of his being his guest sometimes till two or three in the morning. At his house I hoped to have many opportunities of seeing the sage, as Mr. Sheridan obligingly assured me I should not be disappointed.

When I returned to London in the end of 1762, to my surprise and regret I found an irreconcilable difference had taken place between Johnson and Sheridan. A pension of two hundred pounds a year had been given to Sheridan. Johnson, who, as has been already mentioned, thought slightly of Sheridan's art, upon hearing that he was also pensioned, exclaimed, "What! have they given *him* a pension? Then it is time for me to give up mine." Whether this proceeded from a momentary indignation, as if it were an affront to his exalted merit that a player should be rewarded in the same manner with him, or was the sudden effect of a fit of peevishness, it was unluckily said, and, indeed, cannot be justified. Mr. Sheridan's pension was granted to him not as a player, but as a sufferer in the cause of government, when he was manager of the Theatre Royal in Ireland, when parties ran high in 1753. And it must also be allowed that he was a man of literature, and had considerably improved the arts of reading and speaking with distinctness and propriety.

Johnson complained that a man who disliked him repeated his sarcasm to Mr. Sheridan, without telling him what followed, which was, that after a pause he added, "However, I am glad that Mr. Sheridan has a pension, for he is a very

good man." Sheridan could never forgive this hasty contemptuous expression. It rankled in his mind; and though I informed him of all that Johnson said, and that he would be very glad to meet him amicably, he positively declined repeated offers which I made, and once went off abruptly from a house where he and I were engaged to dine, because he was told that Dr. Johnson was to be there. I have no sympathetic feeling with such persevering resentment. It is painful when there is a breach between those who have lived together socially and cordially; and I wonder that there is not, in all such cases, a mutual wish that it should be healed. I could perceive that Mr. Sheridan was by no means satisfied with Johnson's acknowledging him to be a good man. That could not soothe his injured vanity. I could not but smile, at the same time that I was offended, to observe Sheridan in *The Life of Swift*, which he afterwards published, attempting, in the writhings of his resentment, to depreciate Johnson, by characterizing him as "A writer of gigantic fame, in these days of little men;" that very Johnson whom he once so highly admired and venerated.

This rupture with Sheridan deprived Johnson of one of his most agreeable resources for amusement in his lonely evenings; for Sheridan's well-informed, animated, and bustling mind never suffered conversation to stagnate; and Mrs. Sheridan was a most agreeable companion to an intellectual man. She was sensible, ingenious, unassuming, yet communicative. I recollect, with satisfaction, many pleasing hours which I passed with her under the hospitable roof of her husband, who was to me a very kind friend. Her novel, entitled *Memoirs of Miss Sydney Biddulph*, contains an excellent moral, while it inculcates a future state of retribution; and what it teaches is impressed upon the mind by a series of as deep distress as can affect humanity, in the amiable and pious heroine who goes to her grave unrelieved, but resigned, and full of hope of "heaven's mercy." Johnson paid her this high compliment upon it: "I know not, Madam, that you have a right, upon moral principles, to make your readers suffer so much."

Mr. Thomas Davies the actor, who then kept a bookseller's shop in Russel-street Covent-garden, told me that Johnson was very much his friend, and came frequently to his house, where he more than once invited me to meet him: but by some unlucky accident or other he was prevented from coming to us.

Mr. Thomas Davies was a man of good understanding and talents, with the advantage of a liberal education. Though somewhat pompous, he was an entertaining companion; and his literary performances have no inconsiderable share of merit. He was a friendly and very hospitable man. Both he and his wife, (who has been celebrated for her beauty,) though upon the stage for many years, maintained an uniform decency of character; and Johnson esteemed them, and lived in as easy an intimacy with them as with any family which he used to visit. Mr. Davies recollected several of Johnson's remarkable sayings, and was one of the best of the many imitators of his voice and manner, while relating them. He increased my impatience more and more to see the extraordinary man whose works I highly valued, and whose conversation was reported to be so peculiarly excellent.

At last, on Monday the 16th of May, when I was sitting in Mr. Davies's back-parlor, after having drunk tea with him and Mrs. Davies, Johnson unexpectedly came into the shop; and Mr. Davies having perceived him through the glass-door in the room in which we were sitting, advancing towards us, — he announced his awful approach to me, somewhat in the manner of an actor in the part of Horatio, when he addresses Hamlet on the appearance of his father's ghost, "Look, my Lord, it comes." I found that I had a very perfect idea of Johnson's figure, from the portrait of him painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds soon after he had published his *Dictionary*, in the attitude of sitting in his easy chair in deep meditation; which was the first picture his friend did for him, which Sir Joshua very kindly presented to me, and from which an engraving has been made for this work. Mr. Davies mentioned my name, and respectfully introduced me to him. I was much agitated; and recollect-

ing his prejudice against the Scotch, of which I had heard much, I said to Davies, "Don't tell where I come from." — "From Scotland," cried Davies, roguishly. "Mr. Johnson, (said I) I do indeed come from Scotland, but I cannot help it." I am willing to flatter myself that I meant this as light pleasantry to soothe and conciliate him, and not as an humiliating abasement at the expense of my country. But however that might be, this speech was somewhat unlucky; for with that quickness of wit for which he was so remarkable, he seized the expression "come from Scotland," which I used in the sense of being of that country; and, as if I had said that I had come away from it, or left it, retorted, "That, Sir, I find, is what a very great many of your countrymen cannot help." This stroke stunned me a good deal; and when we had sat down, I felt myself not a little embarrassed, and apprehensive of what might come next. He then addressed himself to Davies: "What do you think of Garrick? He has refused me an order for the play for Miss Williams, because he knows the house will be full, and that an order would be worth three shillings." Eager to take any opening to get into conversation with him, I ventured to say, 'O, Sir, I cannot think Mr. Garrick would grudge such a trifle to you.' "Sir, (said he, with a stern look), I have known David Garrick longer than you have done; and I know no right you have to talk to me on the subject." Perhaps I deserved this check; for it was rather presumptuous in me, an entire stranger, to express any doubt of the justice of his animadversion upon his old acquaintance and pupil. I now felt myself much mortified, and began to think, that the hope which I had long indulged of obtaining his acquaintance was blasted. And, in truth, had not my ardor been uncommonly strong, and my resolution uncommonly persevering so rough a reception might have deterred me for ever from making any further attempts. Fortunately, however, I remained upon the field not wholly discomfited; and was soon rewarded by hearing some of his conversation, of which I preserved the following short minute, without marking the questions and observations by which it was produced.

"People (he remarked) may be taken in once, who imagine that an author is greater in private life than other men. Uncommon parts require uncommon opportunities for their exertion.

"In barbarous society, superiority of parts is of real consequence. Great strength or great wisdom is of much value to an individual. But in more polished times there are people to do everything for money; and then there are a number of other superiorities, such as those of birth and fortune, and rank, that dissipate men's attention, and leave no extraordinary share of respect for personal and intellectual superiority. This is wisely ordered by Providence, to preserve some equality among mankind."

"Sir, this book (*The Elements of Criticism*, which he had taken up,) is a pretty essay, and deserves to be held in some estimation, though much of it is chimerical."

Speaking of one who with more than ordinary boldness attacked public measures and the royal family, he said, "I think he is safe from the law, but he is an abusive scoundrel, and instead of applying to my Lord Chief Justice to punish him, I would send half a dozen footmen and have him well ducked."

"The notion of liberty amuses the people of England, and helps to keep off the *tedium vitae*.¹ When a butcher tells you that *his heart bleeds for his country*, he has, in fact, no uneasy feeling."

"Sheridan will not succeed at Bath with his oratory. Ridicule has gone down before him, and I doubt, Derrick is his enemy."

"Derrick may do very well, as long as he can outrun his character; but the moment his character gets up with him, it is all over."

It is, however, but just to record, that some years afterwards, when I reminded him of this sarcasm, he said, "Well, but Derrick has now got a character that he need not run away from."

I was highly pleased with the extraordinary vigor of his

¹ Ennui, boredom.

conversation, and regretted that I was drawn away from it by an engagement at another place. I had, for a part of the evening, been left alone with him, and had ventured to make an observation now and then, which he received very civilly; so that I was satisfied that though there was a roughness in his manner, there was no ill-nature in his disposition. Davies followed me to the door, and when I complained to him a little of the hard blows which the great man had given me, he kindly took upon him to console me by saying, "Don't be uneasy. I can see he likes you very well."

A few days afterwards I called on Davies, and asked him if he thought I might take the liberty of waiting on Mr. Johnson at his chambers in the Temple. He said I certainly might, and that Mr. Johnson would take it as a compliment. So on Tuesday the 24th of May, after having been enlivened by the witty sallies of Messieurs Thornton, Wilkes, Churchill, and Lloyd, with whom I had passed the morning, I boldly repaired to Johnson. His Chambers were on the first floor of No. 1, Inner-Temple-lane, and I entered them with an impression given me by the Reverend Dr. Blair, of Edinburgh, who had been introduced to him not long before, and described his having "found the Giant in his den"; an expression which, when I came to be pretty well acquainted with Johnson, I repeated to him, and he was diverted at this picturesque account of himself. At this time the controversy concerning the pieces published by Mr. James Macpherson, as translations of Ossian, was at its height. Johnson had all along denied their authenticity; and, what was still more provoking to their admirers, maintained that they had no merit. The subject having been introduced by Dr. Fordyce, Dr. Blair, relying on the internal evidence of their antiquity, asked Dr. Johnson whether he thought any man of a modern age could have written such poems? Johnson replied, "Yes, Sir, many men, many women, and many children." Johnson at this time, did not know that Dr. Blair had just published a *Dissertation*, not only defending their authenticity, but seriously ranking them with the poems of Homer and Virgil; and when he was afterwards informed of

this circumstance, he expressed some displeasure at Dr. Fordyce's having suggested the topic, and said, "I am not sorry that they got thus much for their pains. Sir, it was like leading one to talk of a book, when the author is concealed behind the door."

He received me very courteously: but, it must be confessed, that his apartment, and furniture, and morning dress, were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of clothes looked very rusty: he had on a little old shrivelled unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose; his black worsted stockings ill drawn up; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment that he began to talk. Some gentlemen, whom I do not recollect, were sitting with him; and when they went away, I also rose; but he said to me, "Nay, don't go." — "Sir, (said I), I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you." He seemed pleased with this compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, "Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me." — I have preserved the following short minute of what passed this day.

"Madness frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind, by falling upon his knees, and saying his prayers in the street, or in any other unusual place. Now although, rationally speaking, it is greater madness not to pray at all, than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid there are so many who do not pray, that their understanding is not called in question."

Concerning this unfortunate poet, Christopher Smart, who was confined in a mad-house, he had, at another time, the following conversation with Dr. Burney. — Burney. "How does poor Smart do, Sir; is he likely to recover?" Johnson. "It seems as if his mind had ceased to struggle with the disease; for he grows fat upon it." Burney. "Perhaps, Sir, that may be from want of exercise." Johnson. "No, Sir, he has partly as much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in

the garden. Indeed, before his confinement, he used for exercise to walk to the alehouse; but he was *carried* back again. I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as any one else. Another charge was, that he did not love clean linen; and I have no passion for it."

Johnson continued. "Mankind have a great aversion to intellectual labor; but even supposing knowledge to be easily attainable, more people would be content to be ignorant than would take even a little trouble to acquire it."

"The morality of an action depends on the motive from which we act. If I fling half a crown to a beggar with intention to break his head, and he picks it up and buys victuals with it, the physical effect is good; but, with respect to me, the action is very wrong. So, religious exercises, if not performed with an intention to please God, avail us nothing. As our Saviour says of those who perform them from other motives, 'Verily they have their reward.'"

"The Christian religion has very strong evidences. It, indeed, appears in some degree strange to reason; but in History we have undoubted facts, against which, in reasoning *a priori*, we have more arguments than we have for them; but then, testimony has great weight, and casts the balance. I would recommend to every man whose faith is yet unsettled, Grotius, — Dr. Pearson, — and Dr. Clarke."

Talking of Garrick, he said, "He is the first man in the world for sprightly conversation."

When I rose a second time, he again pressed me to stay, which I did.

He told me, that he generally went abroad at four in the afternoon, and seldom came home till two in the morning. I took the liberty to ask if he did not think it wrong to live thus, and not make more use of his great talents. He owned it was a bad habit. On reviewing at the distance of many years my journal of this period, I wonder how, at my first visit, I ventured to talk to him so freely, and that he bore it with so much indulgence.

Before we parted, he was so good as to promise to favor me with his company one evening at my lodgings: and, as I took my leave, shook me cordially by the hand. It is almost needless to add, that I felt no little elation at having now so happily established an acquaintance of which I had been so long ambitious.

My readers will, I trust, excuse me for being thus minutely circumstantial, when it is considered that the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson was to me a most valuable acquisition, and laid the foundation of whatever instruction and entertainment they may receive from my collections concerning the great subject of the work which they are now perusing.

I did not visit him again till Monday, June 13, at which time I recollect no part of his conversation, except that when I told him I had been to see Johnson ride upon three horses, he said, "Such a man, Sir, should be encouraged; for his performances show the extent of the human powers in one instance, and thus tend to raise our opinion of the faculties of man. He shows what may be attained by persevering application; so that every man may hope, that by giving as much application, although perhaps he may never ride three horses at a time, or dance upon a wire, yet he may be equally expert in whatever profession he has chosen to pursue."

He again shook me by the hand at parting, and asked me why I did not come oftener to him. Trusting that I was now in his good graces, I answered, that he had not given me much encouragement, and reminded him of the check I had received from him at our first interview. "Poh, poh! (said he, with a complacent smile,) never mind these things. Come to me as often as you can. I shall be glad to see you."

Our next meeting was not till Saturday, June 25, when happening to dine at Clifton's eating-house, in Butcher-row, I was surprised to perceive Johnson come in and take his seat at another table. Johnson had not observed that I was in the room. I followed him, however, and he agreed to meet me in the evening at the Mitre. I called on him, and we went thither at nine. We had a good supper, and port wine, of which he then sometimes drank a bottle. The orthodox

high-church sound of the Mitre, — the figure and manner of the celebrated Samuel Johnson, — the extraordinary power and precision of his conversation, and the pride arising from finding myself admitted as his companion, produced a variety of sensations, and a pleasing elevation of mind beyond what I had ever before experienced. I find in my Journal the following minute of our conversation, which, though it will give but a very faint notion of what passed, is, in some degree, a valuable record; and it will be curious in this view, as showing how habitual to his mind were some opinions which appear in his works.

“Colley Cibber, Sir, was by no means a blockhead; but by arrogating to himself too much, he was in danger of losing that degree of estimation to which he was entitled. His friends gave out that he *intended* his *Birthday Odes* should be bad: but that was not the case, Sir; for he kept them many months by him, and a few years before he died he showed me one of them, with great solicitude to render it as perfect as might be, and I made some corrections, to which he was not very willing to submit. I remember the following couplet in allusion to the King and himself:

‘Perch’d on the eagle’s soaring wing,
The lowly linnet loves to sing.’

Sir, he had heard something of the fabulous tale of the wren sitting upon the eagle’s wing, and he had applied it to a linnet. Cibber’s familiar style, however, was better than that which Whitehead has assumed. *Grand* nonsense is insupportable. Whitehead is but a little man to inscribe verses to players.”

I did not presume to controvert this censure, which was tinged with his prejudice against players, but I could not help thinking that a dramatic poet might with propriety pay a compliment to an eminent performer, as Whitehead has very happily done in his verses to Mr. Garrick.

“Sir, I do not think Gray a first-rate poet. He has not a bold imagination, nor much command of words. The obscurity in which he has involved himself will not persuade us that he is sublime. His *Elegy in a Church-yard* has a happy

selection of images, but I don't like what are called his great things."

I mentioned Mallet's tragedy of *Elvira*, which had been acted the preceding winter at Drury-lane, and that the Honorable Andrew Erskine, Mr. Dempster, and myself, had joined in writing a pamphlet, entitled *Critical Strictures* against it. That the mildness of Dempster's disposition had, however, relented; and he had candidly said, "We have hardly a right to abuse this tragedy; for bad as it is, how vain should either of us be to write one not near so good." Johnson. "Why no, Sir; this is not just reasoning. You *may* abuse a tragedy, though you cannot write one. You may scold a carpenter who has made you a bad table, though you cannot make a table. It is not your trade to make tables."

As Dr. Oliver Goldsmith will frequently appear in this narrative, I shall endeavor to make my readers in some degree acquainted with his singular character. He was a native of Ireland, and a contemporary with Mr. Burke, at Trinity College, Dublin, but did not then give much promise of future celebrity. He, however, observed to Mr. Malone, that "though he made no great figure in mathematics, which was a study in much repute there, he could turn an Ode of Horace into English better than any of them." He afterwards studied physic at Edinburgh, and upon the Continent: and I have been informed, was enabled to pursue his travels on foot, partly by demanding at Universities to enter the lists as a disputant, by which, according to the custom of many of them, he was entitled to the premium of a crown, when luckily for him his challenge was not accepted; so that, as I once observed to Dr. Johnson, he *disputed* his passage through Europe. He then came to England, and was employed successively in the capacities of an usher to an academy, a corrector of the press, a reviewer, and a writer for a newspaper. He had sagacity enough to cultivate assiduously the acquaintance of Johnson, and his faculties were gradually enlarged by the contemplation of such a model. To me and many others it appeared that he studiously copied the manner of Johnson, though, indeed, upon a smaller scale.

At this time I think he had published nothing with his name, though it was pretty generally known that *one Dr. Goldsmith* was the author of *An Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*, and of *The Citizen of the World*, a series of letters supposed to be written from London by a Chinese. No man had the art of displaying with more advantage as a writer whatever literary acquisitions he made. *Nihil quod tetigit non ornavit*.¹ His mind resembled a fertile, but thin soil. There was a quick, but not a strong vegetation, of whatever chanced to be thrown upon it. No deep root could be struck. The oak of the forest did not grow there: but the elegant shrubbery and the fragrant parterre appeared in gay succession. It has been generally circulated and believed that he was a mere fool in conversation; but, in truth, this has been greatly exaggerated. He had, no doubt, a more than common share of that hurry of ideas which we often find in his countrymen, and which sometimes produces a laughable confusion in expressing them. He was very much what the French call *un étourdi*,² and from vanity and an eager desire of being conspicuous wherever he was, he frequently talked carelessly without knowledge of the subject, or even without thought. His person was short, his countenance coarse and vulgar, his deportment that of a scholar awkwardly affecting the easy gentleman. Those who were in any way distinguished excited envy in him to so ridiculous an excess, that the instances of it are hardly credible. When accompanying two beautiful young ladies with their mother on a tour in France, he was seriously angry that more attention was paid to them than to him; and once at the exhibition of the *Fantoccini*³ in London, when those who sat next him observed with what dexterity a puppet was made to toss a pike, he could not bear that it should have such praise, and exclaimed with some warmth, "Pshaw! I can do it better myself."

He, I am afraid, had no settled system of any sort, so that

¹ There was nothing which he touched that he did not adorn.

² A light-headed person.

³ Marionettes, puppets.

his conduct must not be strictly scrutinized; but his affections were social and generous, and when he had money he gave it away very liberally. His desire of imaginary consequence predominated over his attention to truth. When he began to rise into notice, he said he had a brother who was Dean of Durham, a fiction so easily detected, that it is wonderful how he should have been so inconsiderate as to hazard it. He boasted to me at this time of the power of his pen in commanding money, which I believe was true in a certain degree, though in the instance he gave he was by no means correct. He told me that he had sold a novel for four hundred pounds. This was his *Vicar of Wakefield*. But Johnson informed me, that he had made the bargain for Goldsmith, and the price was sixty pounds. "And, Sir, (said he,) a sufficient price too, when it was sold; for then the fame of Goldsmith had not been elevated, as it afterwards was, by his *Traveller*: and the bookseller had such faint hopes of profit by his bargain, that he kept the manuscript by him a long time, and did not publish it till after *The Traveller* had appeared. Then, to be sure, it was accidentally worth more money."

Mrs. Piozzi and Sir John Hawkins have strangely misstated the history of Goldsmith's situation and Johnson's friendly interference, when this novel was sold. I shall give it authentically from Johnson's own exact narration.

"I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me that he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit; told the landlady I should soon return, and having gone to a bookseller, sold it for

sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill."

I had as my guests this evening at the Mitre tavern, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Thomas Davies, Mr. Eccles, an Irish gentleman, for whose agreeable company I was obliged to Mr. Davies, and the Reverend Mr. John Ogilvie, who was desirous of being in company with my illustrious friend, while I, in my turn, was proud to have the honor of showing one of my countrymen upon what easy terms Johnson permitted me to live with him.

Mr. Ogilvie was unlucky enough to choose for the topic of his conversation the praises of his native country. He began with saying, that there was very rich land around Edinburgh. Goldsmith, who had studied physic there, contradicted this, very untruly, with a sneering laugh. Disconcerted a little by this, Mr. Ogilvie then took a new ground, where, I suppose, he thought himself perfectly safe; for he observed, that Scotland had a great many noble wild prospects. Johnson. "I believe, Sir, you have a great many. Norway, too, has noble wild prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, Sir, let me tell you, the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!" This unexpected and pointed sally produced a roar of applause. After all, however, those who admire the rude grandeur of Nature cannot deny it to Caledonia.

On Saturday, July 9, I found Johnson surrounded with a numerous levee, but have not preserved any part of his conversation. On the 14th we had another evening by ourselves at the Mitre. It happening to be a very rainy night, I made some common-place observations on the relaxation of nerves and depression of spirits which such weather occasioned; adding, however, that it was good for the vegetable creation. Johnson, who, as we have already seen, denied that the temperature of the air had any influence on the human frame, answered, with a smile of ridicule, "Why, yes, Sir, it is good for vegetables, and for the animals who eat those vegetables,

and for the animals who eat those animals." This observation of his aptly enough introduced a good supper; and I soon forgot, in Johnson's company, the influence of a moist atmosphere.

He enlarged very convincingly upon the excellence of rhyme over blank verse in English poetry. I mentioned to him that Dr. Adam Smith, in his lectures upon composition, when I studied under him in the College of Glasgow, had maintained the same opinion strenuously, and I repeated some of his arguments. Johnson. "Sir, I was once in company with Smith, and we did not take to each other; but had I known that he loved rhyme as much as you tell me he does, I should have *hugged* him."

Mr. Levett this day showed me Dr. Johnson's library, which was contained in two garrets over his Chambers, where Lintot, son of the celebrated bookseller of that name, had formerly his warehouse. I found a number of good books, but very dusty and in great confusion. The floor was strewn with manuscript, leaves, in Johnson's own handwriting, which I beheld with a degree of veneration, supposing they perhaps might contain portions of the *Rambler*, or of *Rasselas*. I observed an apparatus for chemical experiments, of which Johnson was all his life very fond. The place seemed to be very favorable for retirement and meditation. Johnson told me, that he went up thither without mentioning it to his servant when he wanted to study, secure from interruption; for he would not allow his servant to say he was not at home when he really was. "A servant's strict regard for truth, (said he) must be weakened by such a practice. A philosopher may know that it is merely a form of denial; but few servants are such nice distinguishers. If I accustom a servant to tell a lie for *me*, have I not reason to apprehend that he will tell many lies for *himself*?" I am, however, satisfied, that every servant, of any degree of intelligence, understands saying his master is not at home, not at all as the affirmation of a fact, but as the customary words, intimating that his master wished not to be seen; so that there can be no bad effect from it.

At night, Mr. Johnson and I supped in a private room at the Turk's Head coffee-house, in the Strand. "I encourage this house (said he,) for the mistress of it is a good civil woman, and has not much business."

"Sir, I love the acquaintance of young people; because, in the first place, I don't like to think myself growing old. In the next place, young acquaintances must last longest, if they do last; and then, Sir, young men have more virtue than old men; they have more generous sentiments in every respect. I love the young dogs of this age, they have more wit and humor and knowledge of life than we had; but then the dogs are not so good scholars. Sir, in my early years I read very hard. It is a sad reflection but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now. My judgment, to be sure, was not so good, but I had all the facts. I remember very well, when I was at Oxford, an old gentleman said to me, 'Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task.'"

I spoke of Sir James Macdonald as a young man of most distinguished merit, who united the highest reputation at Eton and Oxford, with the patriarchal spirit of a great Highland Chieftain. I mentioned that Sir James had said to me, that he had never seen Mr. Johnson, but he had a great respect for him, though at the same time it was mixed with some degree of terror. Johnson. "Sir, if he were to be acquainted with me, it might lessen both."

The mention of this gentleman led us to talk of the Western Islands of Scotland, to visit which he expressed a wish that then appeared to be a very romantic fancy, which I little thought would be afterwards realized. He told me, that his father had put Martin's account of those islands into his hands when he was very young, and that he was highly pleased with it; that he was particularly struck with the St. Kilda man's notion that the high church of Glasgow had been hollowed out of a rock; a circumstance to which old Mr. Johnson had directed his attention. He said, he would

go to the Hebrides with me, when I returned from my travels, unless some very good companion should offer when I was absent, which he did not think probable; adding, "There are few people whom I take so much to, as you." And when I talked of my leaving England, he said with a very affectionate air, "My dear Boswell, I should be very unhappy at parting, did I think we were not to meet again." — I cannot too often remind my readers that although such instances of his kindness are doubtless very flattering to me, yet I hope my recording them will be ascribed to a better motive than to vanity; for they afford unquestionable evidence of his tenderness and complacency, which some, while they were forced to acknowledge his great powers, have been so strenuous to deny.

He maintained that a boy at school was the happiest of human beings. I supported a different opinion, from which I have never yet varied, that a man is happier: and I enlarged upon the anxiety and sufferings which are endured at school. Johnson. "Ah! Sir, a boy's being flogged is not so severe as a man's having the hiss of the world against him. Men have a solicitude about fame; and the greater share they have of it, the more afraid they are of losing it." I silently asked myself, "Is it possible that the great Samuel Johnson really entertains any such apprehension, and is not confident that his exalted fame is established upon a foundation never to be shaken?"

On Thursday, July 28, we again supped in private at the Turk's Head coffee-house. Johnson. "Swift has a higher reputation than he deserves. His excellence is strong sense; for his humor, though very well, is not remarkably good.

"Thomson, I think, had as much of the poet about him as most writers. Everything appeared to him through the medium of his favorite pursuit. He could not have viewed those two candles burning but with a poetical eye."

"Has not — a great deal of wit, Sir?" Johnson. "I do not think so, Sir. He is, indeed, continually attempting wit, but he fails. And I have no more pleasure in hearing a man

attempting wit and failing, than in seeing a man trying to leap over a ditch and tumbling into it."

He laughed heartily when I mentioned to him a saying of his concerning Mr. Thomas Sheridan, which Foote took a wicked pleasure to circulate. "Why, Sir, Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him. Such an excess of stupidity, Sir, is not in Nature." — "So (said he,) I allowed him all his own merit."

He now added, "Sheridan cannot bear me. I bring his declamation to a point. I ask him a plain question, 'What do you mean to teach?' Besides, Sir, what influence can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this great country, by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover, to show light at Calais."

On Saturday, July 30, Dr. Johnson and I took a sculler at the Temple stairs, and set out for Greenwich. I asked him if he really thought a knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages an essential requisite to a good education. Johnson. "Most certainly, Sir; for those who know them have a very great advantage over those who do not. Nay, Sir, it is wonderful what a difference learning makes upon people even in the common intercourse of life, which does not appear to be much connected with it." "And yet, (said I) people go through the world very well, and carry on the business of life to good advantage, without learning." Johnson. "Why, Sir, that may be true in cases where learning cannot possibly be of any use; for instance, this boy rows us as well without learning, as if he could sing the song of Orpheus to the Argonauts, who were the first sailors." He then called to the boy. "What would you give, my lad, to know about the Argonauts?" "Sir, (said the boy) I would give what I have." Johnson was much pleased with his answer, and we gave him a double fare. Dr. Johnson then turning to me, "Sir, (said he) a desire of knowledge is the natural feeling of mankind; and every human being, whose mind is not debauched, will be willing to give all that he has, to get knowledge."

We landed at the Old Swan, and walked to Billingsgate, where we took oars and moved smoothly along the silver Thames. It was a very fine day. We were entertained with the immense number and variety of ships that were lying at anchor, and with the beautiful country on each side of the river.

I talked of preaching, and of the great success which those called Methodists have. Johnson. "Sir, it is owing to their expressing themselves in a plain and familiar manner, which is the only way to do good to the common people, and which clergymen of genius and learning ought to do from a principle of duty, when it is suited to their congregation; a practice, for which they will be praised by men of sense. To insist against drunkenness as a crime, because it debases reason, the noblest faculty of man, would be of no service to the common people; but to tell them that they may die in a fit of drunkenness, and show them how dreadful that would be, cannot fail to make a deep impression. Sir, when your Scotch clergy give up their homely manner, religion will soon decay in that country." Let this observation, as Johnson meant it, be ever remembered.

I was much pleased to find myself with Johnson at Greenwich, which he celebrates in his *London* as a favorite scene. I had the poem in my pocket, and read the lines aloud with enthusiasm:

"On Thames's banks in silent thought we stood,
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood:
Pleas'd with the seat which gave Eliza birth,
We kneel, and kiss the consecrated earth."

He remarked that the structure of Greenwich hospital was too magnificent for a place of charity, and that its parts were too much detached, to make one great whole.

We walked in the evening in Greenwich Park. He asked me, I suppose, by the way of trying my disposition, "Is not this very fine?" Having no exquisite relish of the beauties of Nature, and being more delighted with "the busy hum of men," I answered, "Yes, Sir; but not equal to Fleet-street." Johnson. "You are right, Sir."

I am aware that many of my readers may censure my want of taste. Let me, however, shelter myself under the authority of a very fashionable Baronet in the brilliant world, who, on his attention being called to the fragrance of a May evening in the country, observed, "This may be very well; but for my part, I prefer the smell of a flambeau at the play-house."

We stayed so long at Greenwich, that our sail up the river, in our return to London, was by no means so pleasant as in the morning; for the night air was so cold that it made me shiver. I was the more sensible of it from having sat up all the night before recollecting and writing in my Journal what I thought worthy of preservation; an exertion, which, during the first part of my acquaintance with Johnson, I frequently made. I remember having sat up four nights in one week, without being much incommoded in the day time.

Johnson, whose robust frame was not in the least affected by the cold, scolded me, as if my shivering had been a paltry effeminacy, saying, "Why do you shiver?" Sir William Scott, of the Commons, told me, that when he complained of a headache in the post-chaise, as they were travelling together to Scotland, Johnson treated him in the same manner: "At your age, Sir, I had no headache." It is not easy to make allowance for sensations in others, which we ourselves have not at the time. We must all have experienced how very differently we are affected by the complaints of our neighbors, when we are well and when we are ill. In full health, we can scarcely believe that they suffer much; so faint is the image of pain upon our imagination; when softened by sickness, we readily sympathize with the sufferings of others.

After we had again talked of my setting out for Holland, he said, "I must see thee out of England; I will accompany you to Harwich." I could not find words to express what I felt upon this unexpected and very great mark of his affectionate regard.

Next day, Sunday July 31, I told him I had been that morning at a meeting of the people called Quakers, where I

had heard a woman preach. Johnson. "Sir, a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

On Tuesday, August 2, (the day of my departure from London having been fixed for the 5th,) Dr. Johnson did me the honor to pass a part of the morning with me at my Chambers. He said, that "he always felt an inclination to do nothing." I observed, that it was strange to think that the most indolent man in Britain had written the most laborious work, *The English Dictionary*.

After tea he carried me to what he called his walk, which was a long narrow paved court in the neighborhood, overshadowed by some trees. There we sauntered a considerable time; and I complained to him that my love of London and of his company was such, that I shrunk almost from the thought of going even to travel, which is generally so much desired by young men. He roused me by manly and spirited conversation. He advised me, when settled in any place abroad, to study with an eagerness after knowledge, and to apply to Greek an hour every day; and when I was moving about, to read diligently the great book of mankind.

On Friday, August 5, we set out early in the morning in the Harwich stage coach. A fat elderly gentlewoman and a young Dutchman seemed the most inclined among us to conversation. At the inn where we dined, the gentlewoman said that she had done her best to educate her children; and, particularly, that she had never suffered them to be a moment idle. Johnson. "I wish, Madam, you would educate me too; for I have been an idle fellow all my life." "I am sure, Sir, (said she) you have not been idle." Johnson. "Nay, Madam, it is very true; and that gentleman there, (pointing to me) has been idle. He was idle at Edinburgh. His father sent him to Glasgow, where he continued to be idle. He then came to London, where he has been very idle; and now he is going to Utrecht, where he will be as idle as ever." I asked him privately how he could expose me so. Johnson. "Poh, poh! (said he) they knew nothing about you, and will think of it no more." Though by no means niggardly,

his attention to what was generally right was so minute, that having observed at one of the stages that I ostentatiously gave a shilling to the coachman, when the custom was for each passenger to give only sixpence, he took me aside and scolded me, saying that what I had done would make the coachman dissatisfied with all the rest of the passengers who gave him no more than his due. This was a just reprimand; for in whatever way a man may indulge his generosity or his vanity in spending his money, for the sake of others, he ought not to raise the price of any article for which there is a constant demand.

At supper this night he talked of good eating with uncommon satisfaction. "Some people (said he,) have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my part, I mind my belly very studiously, and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly, will hardly mind anything else." He now appeared to me *Jean Bull philosophe*,¹ and he was for the moment, not only serious but vehement. Yet I have heard him, upon other occasions, talk with great contempt of people who were anxious to gratify their palates; and the 206th number of his *Rambler* is a masterly essay against gulosity. His practice, indeed, I must acknowledge, may be considered as casting the balance of his different opinions upon this subject; for I never knew any man who relished good eating more than he did. When at table, he was totally absorbed in the business of the moment; his looks seemed riveted to his plate; nor would he, unless when in very high company, say one word, or even pay the least attention to what was said by others, till he had satisfied his appetite: which was so fierce, and indulged with such intenseness, that while in the act of eating, the veins of his forehead swelled, and generally a strong perspiration was visible. To those whose sensations were delicate, this could not but be disgusting; and it was doubtless not very suitable to the character of a philosopher, who should be distinguished by self-command. But it must be owned, that Johnson, though he could be

¹ John Bull in the role of a philosopher.

rigidly *abstemious*, was not a *temperate* man either in eating or drinking. He could refrain, but he could not use moderately. He told me, that he had fasted two days without inconvenience, and that he had never been hungry but once. They who beheld with wonder how much he ate upon all occasions, when his dinner was to his taste, could not easily conceive what he must have meant by hunger; and not only was he remarkable for the extraordinary quantity which he ate, but he was, or affected to be, a man of very nice discernment in the science of cookery. He used to descant critically on the dishes which had been at table where he had dined or supped, and to recollect very minutely what he had liked. I remember when he was in Scotland, his praising *Gordon's palates*, (a dish of palates at the Honorable Alexander Gordon's), with a warmth of expression which might have done honor to more important subjects. "As for Maclaurin's imitation of a *made dish*, it was a wretched attempt." He about the same time was so much displeased with the performances of a nobleman's French cook, that he exclaimed with vehemence, "I'd throw such a rascal into the river;" and he then proceeded to alarm a lady at whose house he was to sup, by the following manifesto of his skill: "I, Madam, who live at a variety of good tables, am a much better judge of cookery, than any person who has a very tolerable cook, but lives much at home; for his palate is gradually adapted to the taste of his cook: whereas, Madam, in trying by a wider range, I can more exquisitely judge." When invited to dine, even with an intimate friend, he was not pleased if something better than a plain dinner was not prepared for him. I have heard him say on such an occasion, "This was a good dinner enough, to be sure: but it was not a dinner to *ask* a man to." On the other hand, he was wont to express, with great glee, his satisfaction when he had been entertained quite to his mind. One day when he had dined with his neighbor and landlord, in Bolt-court, Mr. Allen, the printer, whose old housekeeper had studied his taste in every thing, he pronounced this eulogy: "Sir, we could not have had a better dinner, had there been a *Synod of Cooks*."

Next day we got to Harwich, to dinner; and my passage in the packet-boat to Helvoetsluys being secured, and my baggage put on board, we dined at our inn by ourselves. I happened to say, it would be terrible if he should not find a speedy opportunity of returning to London, and be confined in so dull a place. Johnson. "Don't, Sir, accustom yourself to use big words for little matters. It would *not* be terrible though I *were* to be detained some time here." The practice of using words of disproportionate magnitude, is, no doubt, too frequent everywhere; but, I think, most remarkable among the French, of which, all who have traveled in France must have been struck with innumerable instances.

My revered friend walked down with me to the beach, where we embraced and parted with tenderness, and engaged to correspond by letters. I said, "I hope, Sir, you will not forget me, in my absence." Johnson. "Nay, Sir, it is more likely you should forget me, than that I should forget you." As the vessel put out to sea, I kept my eyes upon him for a considerable time, while he remained rolling his majestic frame in his usual manner; and at last I perceived him walk back into the town, and he disappeared.

CHAPTER VI (1764-1767)

THE FOUNDING OF THE CLUB

Founding of the Famous Club — Circumstances of Its Origin — Its Chief Members — Johnson's Observance of Solemn Days — His Hypochondria — Eccentricities — Honorary Degree from Trinity College, Dublin — The Friendship with the Thrales — Johnson's Esteem for Henry Thrale — Value for Johnson of this Connection — The Edition of Shakespeare — Return of Boswell to London.

EARLY in 1764 Johnson paid a visit to the Langton family, at their seat of Langton in Lincolnshire, where he passed some time, much to his satisfaction.

Soon after his return to London, which was in February, was founded that Club which existed long without a name, but at Mr. Garrick's funeral became distinguished by the title of *The Literary Club*. Sir Joshua Reynolds had the merit of being the first proposer of it, to which Johnson acceded; and the original members were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Johnson, Mr. Edmund Burke, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Beauclerk, Mr. Langton, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Chamier, and Sir John Hawkins. They met at the Turk's Head, in Gerrard-street, Soho, one evening in every week, at seven, and generally continued their conversation till a pretty late hour. This club has been gradually increased to its present number, thirty-five. After about ten years, instead of supping weekly, it was resolved to dine together once a fortnight during the meeting of Parliament. Their original tavern having been converted into a private house, they moved first to Prince's in Sackville-street, then to Le Telier's in Dover-street, and now meet at Parsloe's, St. James's-street. Between the time of its formation and the time at which this work is passing through the press, (June 1792), the following persons, now dead, were members of it: Mr. Dunning, (afterwards Lord Ashburton,) Mr. Samuel Dyer, Mr. Garrick, Dr. Shipley Bishop of St.

Asaph, Mr. Vesey, Mr. Thomas Warton, and Dr. Adam Smith. The present members are Mr. Burke, Mr. Langton, Lord Charlemont, Sir Robert Chambers, Dr. Percy Bishop of Dromore, Dr. Barnard Bishop of Killaloe, Dr. Marlay Bishop of Clonfert, Mr. Fox, Dr. George Fordyce, Sir William Scott, Sir Joseph Banks, Sir Charles Bunbury, Mr. Windham of Norfolk, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Gibbon, Sir William Jones, Mr. Colman, Mr. Steevens, Dr. Burney, Dr. Joseph Warton, Mr. Malone, Lord Ossory, Lord Spencer, Lord Lucan, Lord Palmerston, Lord Eliot, Lord Macartney, Mr. Richard Burke, junior, Sir William Hamilton, Dr. Warren, Mr. Courtenay, Dr. Hinchliffe, Bishop of Peterborough, the Duke of Leeds, Dr. Douglas Bishop of Salisbury, and the writer of this account.

Sir John Hawkins represents himself as a *seceder* from this society, and assigns as the reason of his *withdrawing* himself from it, that its late hours were inconsistent with his domestic arrangements. In this he is not accurate; for the fact was, that he one evening attacked Mr. Burke in so rude a manner, that all the company testified their displeasure; and at their next meeting his reception was such, that he never came again.

He is equally inaccurate with respect to Mr. Garrick, of whom he says, "he trusted that the least intimation of a desire to come among us, would procure him a ready admission; but in this he was mistaken. Johnson consulted me upon it; and when I could find no objection to receiving him, exclaimed, — 'He will disturb us by his buffoonery;' — and afterwards so managed matters, that he was never formally proposed, and, by consequence, never admitted."

In justice both to Mr. Garrick and Dr. Johnson, I think it necessary to rectify this mis-statement. The truth is, that not very long after the institution of our club, Sir Joshua Reynolds was speaking of it to Garrick. "I like it much, (said he,) I think I shall be of you." When Sir Joshua mentioned this to Dr. Johnson, he was much displeased with the actor's conceit. "*He'll be of us*, (said Johnson) how does he know we will *permit* him? The first Duke in England has no right to hold such language." However, when Garrick was

regularly proposed some time afterwards, Johnson, though he had taken a momentary offence at his arrogance, warmly and kindly supported him, and he was accordingly elected, was a most agreeable member, and continued to attend our meetings to the time of his death.

It was his custom to observe certain days with a pious abstraction: viz., New Year's day, the day of his wife's death, Good Friday, Easterday, and his own birthday. He this year says, "I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving: having, from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing. The need of doing, therefore, is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen." Such a tenderness of conscience, such a fervent desire of improvement, will rarely be found. It is, surely, not decent in those who are hardened in indifference to spiritual improvement, to treat this pious anxiety of Johnson with contempt.

About this time he was afflicted with a very severe return of the hypochondriac disorder, which was ever lurking about him. He was so ill, as, notwithstanding his remarkable love of company, to be entirely averse to society, the most fatal symptom of that malady. Dr. Adams told me, that as an old friend he was admitted to visit him, and that he found him in a deplorable state, sighing, groaning, talking to himself, and restlessly walking from room to room. He then used this emphatical expression of the misery which he felt. "I would consent to have a limb amputated to recover my spirits."

Talking to himself was, indeed, one of his singularities ever since I knew him. I was certain that he was frequently uttering pious ejaculations; for fragments of the Lord's Prayer have been distinctly overheard.

He had another particularity, of which none of his friends even ventured to ask an explanation. It appeared to me some superstitious habit, which he had contracted early, and from which he had never called upon his reason to disentangle him. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage, by a certain number of steps from a certain point,

or at least so as that either his right or his left foot, (I am not certain which), should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture: for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and, having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion. A strange instance of something of this nature, even when on horseback, happened when he was in the Isle of Skye. Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed him to go a good way about, rather than cross a particular alley in Leicester-fields; but this Sir Joshua imputed to his having had some disagreeable recollection associated with it.

That the most minute singularities which belonged to him, and made very observable parts of his appearance and manner, may not be omitted, it is requisite to mention, that while talking or even musing as he sat in his chair, he commonly held his head to one side towards his right shoulder, and shook it in a tremulous manner, moving his body backwards and forwards, and rubbing his left knee in the same direction, with the palm of his hand. In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth; sometimes as if ruminating, or what is called chewing the cud, sometimes giving a half whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen, and sometimes protruding it against his upper gums in front, as if pronouncing quickly under his breath, *too, too, too*: all this accompanied sometimes with a thoughtful look, but more frequently with a smile. Generally when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, by which time he was a good deal exhausted by violence and vociferation, he used to blow out his breath like a whale. This I suppose was a relief to his lungs; and seemed in him to be a contemptuous mode of expression, as if he had made the arguments of his opponent fly like chaff before the wind.

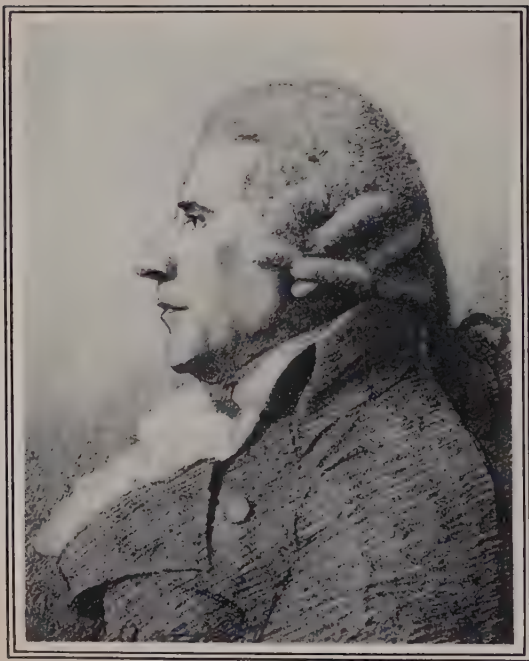
I am fully aware how very obvious an occasion I here give for the sneering jocularly of such as have no relish of an exact likeness; which to render complete, he who draws it must not disdain the slightest strokes. But if witlings should be inclined to attack this account, let them have the candor to quote what I have offered in my defence.

Trinity College, Dublin, at this time surprised Johnson with a spontaneous compliment of the highest academical honors, by creating him Doctor of Laws. This unsolicited mark of distinction, conferred on so great a literary character, did much honor to the judgment and liberal spirit of that learned body.

This year was distinguished by his being introduced into the family of Mr. Thrale, one of the most eminent brewers in England, and Member of Parliament for the borough of Southwark. Foreigners are not a little amazed, when they hear of brewers, distillers, and men in similar departments of trade, held forth as persons of considerable consequence. In this great commercial country it is natural that a situation which produces much wealth should be considered as very respectable; and, no doubt, honest industry is entitled to esteem. But, perhaps, the too rapid advance of men of low extraction tends to lessen the value of that distinction by birth and gentility, which has ever been found beneficial to the grand scheme of subordination. Johnson used to give this account of the rise of Mr. Thrale's father: "He worked at six shillings a week for twenty years in the great brewery, which afterwards was his own. The proprietor of it had an only daughter, who was married to a nobleman. It was not fit that a peer should continue the business. On the old man's death, therefore, the brewery was to be sold. To find a purchaser for so large a property was a difficult matter; and, after some time, it was suggested, that it would be advisable to treat with Thrale, a sensible, active, honest man, who had been employed in the house, and to transfer the whole to him for thirty thousand pounds, security being taken upon the property. This was accordingly settled. In eleven years Thrale paid the purchase money. He acquired a large fortune, and lived to be a Member of Parliament for Southwark.



HESTER LYNCH THRALE
From the portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds



GABRIEL PIOZZI

Who became the second husband of Mrs. Thrale.
From the portrait by G. Dance. Courtesy of the
National Portrait Gallery, London.

But what was most remarkable was the liberality with which he used his riches. He gave his son and daughters the best education. The esteem which his good conduct procured him from the nobleman who had married his master's daughter, made him to be treated with much attention; and his son, both at school and at the University of Oxford, associated with young men of the first rank. His allowance from his father, after he left college, was splendid; no less than a thousand a year. This, in a man who had risen as old Thrale did, was a very extraordinary instance of generosity. He used to say, 'If this young dog does not find so much after I am gone as he expects, let him remember that he has had a great deal in my own time.'"

The son, though in affluent circumstances, had good sense enough to carry on his father's trade, which was of such extent, that I remember he once told me, he would not quit it for an annuity of ten thousand a year; "Not (said he,) that I get ten thousand a year by it, but it is an estate to a family." Having left daughters only, the property was sold for the immense sum of one hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds; a magnificent proof of what may be done by fair trade in no long period of time.

Mr. Thrale had married Miss Hester Lynch Salusbury, of good Welsh extraction, a lady of lively talents, improved by education. That Johnson's introduction into Mr. Thrale's family, which contributed so much to the happiness of his life, was owing to her desire for his conversation, is a very probable and the general supposition: but it is not the truth. Mr. Murphy, who was intimate with Mr. Thrale, having spoken very highly of Dr. Johnson, he was requested to make them acquainted. This being mentioned to Johnson, he accepted of an invitation to dinner at Thrale's, and was so much pleased with his reception, both by Mr. and Mrs. Thrale, and they so much pleased with him, that his invitations to their house were more and more frequent, till at last he became one of the family, and an apartment was appropriated to him, both in their house at Southwark and in their villa at Streatham.

Johnson had a very sincere esteem for Mr. Thrale, as a man of excellent principles, a good scholar, well skilled in trade, of a sound understanding, and of manners such as presented the character of a plain independent English 'Squire. As this family will frequently be mentioned in the course of the following pages, and as a false notion has prevailed that Mr. Thrale was inferior, and in some degree insignificant, compared with Mrs. Thrale, it may be proper to give a true state of the case from the authority of Johnson himself in his own words.

"I know no man, (said he,) who is more master of his wife and family than Thrale. If he but holds up a finger, he is obeyed. It is a great mistake to suppose that she is above him in literary attainments. She is more flippant; but he has ten times her learning: he is a regular scholar; but her learning is that of a school-boy in one of the lower forms." My readers may naturally wish for some representation of the figures of this couple. Mr. Thrale was tall, well proportioned, and stately. As for *Madam*, or *my Mistress*, by which epithets Johnson used to mention Mrs. Thrale, she was short, plump, and brisk. She has herself given us a lively view of the idea which Johnson had of her person, on her appearing before him in a dark-colored gown: "You little creatures should never wear those sort of clothes, however; they are unsuitable in every way. What! have not all insects gay colors?" Mr. Thrale gave his wife a liberal indulgence, both in the choice of their company, and in the mode of entertaining them. He understood and valued Johnson, without remission, from their first acquaintance to the day of his death. Mrs. Thrale was enchanted with Johnson's conversation for its own sake, and had also a very allowable vanity in appearing to be honored with the attention of so celebrated a man.

Nothing could be more fortunate for Johnson than this connection. He had at Mr. Thrale's all the comforts and even luxuries of life: his melancholy was diverted, and his irregular habits lessened by association with an agreeable and well-ordered family. He was treated with the utmost respect,

and even affection. The vivacity of Mrs. Thrale's literary talk roused him to cheerfulness and exertion, even when they were alone. But this was not often the case; for he found here a constant succession of what gave him the highest enjoyment, the society of the learned, the witty, and the eminent in every way; who were assembled in numerous companies; called forth his wonderful powers, and gratified him with admiration, to which no man could be insensible.

In the October of this year he at length gave to the world his edition of Shakespeare, which, if it had no other merit but that of producing his Preface, in which the excellencies and defects of that immortal bard are displayed with a masterly hand, the nation would have had no reason to complain. A blind indiscriminate admiration of Shakespeare had exposed the British nation to the ridicule of foreigners. Johnson, by candidly admitting the faults of his poet, had the more credit in bestowing on him deserved and indisputable praise, and doubtless none of all his panegyrists have done him half so much honor. Their praise was like that of a counsel, upon his own side of the cause; Johnson's was like the grave, well considered, and impartial opinion of the judge, which falls from his lips with weight, and is received with reverence. What he did as a commentator has no small share of merit, though his researches were not so ample, and his investigations so acute as they might have been; which we now certainly know from the labors of other able and ingenious critics who have followed him. He has enriched his edition with a concise account of each play, and of its characteristic excellence. Many of his notes have illustrated obscurities in the text, and placed passages eminent for beauty in a more conspicuous light; and he has, in general, exhibited such a mode of annotation. as may be beneficial to all subsequent editors.

I returned to London in February, and found Dr. Johnson in a good house in Johnson's court, Fleet-street, in which he had accommodated Miss Williams with an apartment on the ground floor, while Mr. Levett occupied his post in the garret: his faithful Francis was still attending upon him. He re-

ceived me with much kindness. The fragments of our first conversation, which I have preserved, are these: I told him that Voltaire, in a conversation with me, had distinguished Pope and Dryden thus: — "Pope drives a handsome chariot, with a couple of neat trim nags; Dryden a coach, and six stately horses." Johnson. "Why, Sir, the truth is, they both drive coaches and six; but Dryden's horses are either galloping or stumbling: Pope's go at a steady even trot." He said of Goldsmith's *Traveller*, which had been published in my absence, "There has not been so fine a poem since Pope's time."

*"To Bennet Langton, Esq. At Langton, Near Spilsby,
Lincolnshire.*

"Dear Sir,

"What your friends have done, that from your departure till now nothing has been heard of you, none of us are able to inform the rest; but as we are all neglected alike, no one thinks himself entitled to the privilege of complaint.

"I should have known nothing of you or of Langton, from the time that dear Miss Langton left us, had not I met Mr. Simpson, of Lincoln, one day in the street, by whom I was informed that Mr. Langton, your Mamma, and yourself, had been all ill, but that you were all recovered.

"That sickness should suspend your correspondence, I did not wonder; but hoped that it would be renewed at your recovery.

"Since you will not inform us where you are, or how you live, I know not whether you desire to know anything of us. However, I will tell you that The Club subsists; but we have the loss of Burke's company since he has been engaged in public business, in which he has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his first appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches in the House for repealing the Stamp Act, which were publicly commended by Mr. Pitt, and have filled the town with wonder.

"Burke is a great man by nature, and is expected soon to attain civil greatness. I am grown greater too, for I have

maintained the newspapers these many weeks; and what is greater still, I have risen every morning since New Year's day, at about eight; when I was up, I have indeed done but little; yet it is no slight advancement to obtain for so many hours more the consciousness of being.

"I wish you were in my new study; I am now writing my first letter in it. I think it looks very pretty about me.

"Dyer is constant at the Club; Hawkins is remiss; I am not over diligent. Dr. Nugent, Dr. Goldsmith, and Mr. Reynolds are very constant. Mr. Lye is printing his Saxon and Gothic Dictionary: all The Club subscribes.

"You will pay my respects to all my Lincolnshire friends.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Most affectionately yours,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"*March 9, 1766.*

"Johnson's-court, Fleet-street."

CHAPTER VII (1767-1771)

JOHNSON CONVERSES WITH HIGH AND LOW

Johnson in the Royal Library — The Meeting with the King — Johnson on the University Libraries — On His Own Writing and Reading — On Lord Lyttelton's History — On Aaron Hill — On Literary Reviews — Johnson Reports the Interview for His Friends — Johnson at the Mitre — On Life in London — On Scotland — On Pope — On Sympathy — On Medicated Baths — On the Subject of Death — Boswell Provokes Johnson — He Apologizes — Dr. Maxwell's Recollections of Johnson's Mode of Life and General Habits.

IN February, 1767, there happened one of the most remarkable incidents of Johnson's life, which gratified his monarchical enthusiasm, and which he loved to relate with all its circumstances, when requested by his friends. This was his being honored by a private conversation with his Majesty, in the library at the Queen's house. He had frequently visited those splendid rooms and noble collection of books, which he used to say was more numerous and curious than he supposed any person could have made in the time which the King had employed. Mr. Barnard, the librarian, took care that he should have every accommodation that could contribute to his ease and convenience, while indulging his literary taste in that place: so that he had here a very agreeable resource at leisure hours.

His Majesty having been informed of his occasional visits, was pleased to signify a desire that he should be told when Dr. Johnson came next to the library. Accordingly, the next time that Johnson did come, as soon as he was fairly engaged with a book, on which, while he sat by the fire, he seemed quite intent, Mr. Barnard stole around to the apartment where the King was, and, in obedience to his Majesty's commands, mentioned that Dr. Johnson was then in the library. His Majesty said he was at leisure, and would go

to him: upon which Mr. Barnard took one of the candles that stood on the King's table, and lighted his Majesty through a suite of rooms, till they came to a private door into the library, of which his Majesty had the key. Being entered, Mr. Barnard stepped forward hastily to Dr. Johnson, who was still in a profound study, and whispered him, "Sir, here is the King." Johnson started up, and stood still. His Majesty approached him, and at once was courteously easy.

His Majesty began by observing, that he understood he came sometimes to the library; and then mentioning his having heard that the Doctor had been lately at Oxford, asked him if he was not fond of going thither. To which Johnson answered, that he was indeed fond of going to Oxford sometimes, but was likewise glad to come back again. The King then asked him what they were doing at Oxford. Johnson answered he could not much commend their diligence, but that in some respects they were mended, for they had put their press under better regulations, and were at that time printing Polybius. He was then asked whether there were better libraries at Oxford or Cambridge. He answered, he believed the Bodleian was larger than any they had at Cambridge; at the same time adding "I hope, whether we have more books or not than they have at Cambridge, we shall make as good use of them as they do." Being asked whether All-Souls or Christ-Church library was the largest, he answered, "All-Souls library is the largest we have, except the Bodleian." "Ay, (said the King,) that is the public library."

His Majesty enquired if he was then writing anything. He answered, he was not, for he had pretty well told the world what he knew, and must now read to acquire more knowledge. The King, as it should seem with a view to urge him to rely on his own stores as an original writer, and to continue his labors, then said "I do not think you borrow much from anybody." Johnson said, he thought he had already done his part as a writer. "I should have thought so too, (said the King,) if you had not written so well." —

Johnson observed to me, upon this that "No man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a King to pay. It was decisive." When asked by another friend, at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, whether he made any reply to this high compliment, he answered, "No, Sir. When the King had said it, it was to be so. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my Sovereign." Perhaps no man who had spent his whole life in courts could have shown a more nice and dignified sense of true politeness than Johnson did in this instance.

His Majesty having observed to him that he supposed he must have read a great deal; Johnson answered, that he thought more than he read; that he had read a great deal in the early part of his life, but having fallen into ill health, he had not been able to read much, compared with others: for instance, he said he had not read much, compared with Dr. Warburton. Upon which the King said, that he heard Dr. Warburton was a man of such general knowledge, that you could scarce talk with him on any subject on which he was not qualified to speak; and that his learning resembled Garrick's acting, in its universality. His Majesty then talked of the controversy between Warburton and Lowth, which he seemed to have read, and asked Johnson what he thought of it. Johnson answered "Warburton has most general, most scholastic learning: Lowth is the more correct scholar. I do not know which of them calls names best." The King was pleased to say he was of the same opinion; adding, "You do not think, then, Dr. Johnson, that there was much argument to the case." Johnson, said, he did not think there was. "Why, truly, (said the King,) when once it comes to calling names, argument is pretty well at an end."

His Majesty then asked him what he thought of Lord Lyttelton's history, which was then just published. Johnson said, he thought his style pretty good, but that he had blamed Henry the Second rather too much. "Why, (said the King,) they seldom do these things by halves." "No, Sir, (answered Johnson), not to Kings." But fearing to be

misunderstood, he proceeded to explain himself; and immediately subjoined, "That for those who spoke worse of Kings than they deserved, he could find no excuse, but that he could more easily conceive how some might speak better of them than they deserved, without any ill intention; for, as Kings had much in their power to give, those who were favored by them would frequently, from gratitude, exaggerate their praises: and as this proceeded from a good motive, it was certainly excusable, as far as error could be excusable."

The King then asked him what he thought of Dr. Hill. Johnson answered, that he was an ingenious man, but had no veracity; and immediately mentioned, as an instance of it, an assertion of that writer, that he had seen objects magnified to a much greater degree by using three or four microscopes at a time than by using one. "Now, (added Johnson,) every one acquainted with microscopes knows, that the more of them he looks through, the less the object will appear." "Why, (replied the King,) this is not only telling an untruth, but telling it clumsily; for, if that be the case, every one who can look through a microscope will be able to detect him."

"I now, (said Johnson to his friends, when relating what had passed,) began to consider that I was depreciating this man in the estimation of his Sovereign, and thought it was time for me to say something that might be more favourable." He added, therefore, that Dr. Hill was, notwithstanding, a very curious observer; and if he would have been contented to tell the world no more than he knew, he might have been a very considerable man, and needed not to have recourse to such mean expedients to raise his reputation.

The King then talked of literary journals, mentioned particularly the *Journal des Savans*, and asked Johnson if it was well done. Johnson said, it was formerly very well done, and gave some account of the persons who began it, and carried it on for some years: enlarging at the same time, on the nature and use of such works. The King asked him if it was well done now. Johnson answered, he had no reason to think that it was. The King then asked him if

there were any other literary journals published in this kingdom, except the *Monthly* and *Critical Reviews*; and on being answered there was no other, his Majesty asked which of them was the best: Johnson answered, that the *Monthly Review* was done with most care, the *Critical* upon the best principles; adding that the authors of the *Monthly Review* were enemies to the Church. This the King said he was sorry to hear.

The conversation next turned on the Philosophical Transactions, when Johnson observed that they had now a better method of arranging their materials than formerly. "Ay, (said the King,) they are obliged to Dr. Johnson for that;" for his Majesty had heard and remembered the circumstance, which Johnson himself had forgot.

His Majesty expressed a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed, and proposed to Dr. Johnson to undertake it. Johnson signified his readiness to comply with his Majesty's wishes.

During the whole of this interview, Johnson talked to his Majesty with profound respect, but still in his firm manly manner, with a sonorous voice, and never in that subdued tone which is commonly used at the levee and in the drawing room. After the King withdrew, Johnson showed himself highly pleased with his Majesty's conversation, and gracious behavior. He said to Mr. Barnard, "Sir, they may talk of the King as they will; but he is the finest gentleman I have ever seen." And he afterwards observed to Mr. Langton, "Sir, his manners are those of as fine a gentleman as we may suppose Lewis the Fourteenth or Charles the Second."

At Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where a circle of Johnson's friends was collected round him to hear his account of this memorable conversation, Dr. Joseph Warton, in his frank and lively manner, was very active in pressing him to mention the particulars. "Come now, Sir, this is an interesting matter; do favor us with it." Johnson, with great good humor, complied.

He told them, "I found his Majesty wished I should talk, and I made it my business to talk. I find it does a man good

to be talked to by his sovereign. In the first place, a man cannot be in a passion —" Here some question interrupted him, which is to be regretted, as he certainly would have pointed out and illustrated many circumstances of advantage, from being in a situation, where the powers of the mind are at once excited to vigorous exertion and tempered by reverential awe.

During all the time in which Dr. Johnson was employed in relating to the circle at Sir Joshua Reynolds's the particulars of what passed between the King and him, Dr. Goldsmith remained unmoved upon a sofa at some distance, affecting not to join in the least in the eager curiosity of the company. He assigned as a reason for his gloom and seeming inattention, that he apprehended Johnson had relinquished his purpose of furnishing him with a Prologue to his play, with the hopes of which he had been flattered; but it was strongly suspected that he was fretting with chagrin and envy at the singular honor Dr. Johnson had lately enjoyed. At length, the frankness and simplicity of his natural character prevailed. He sprung from the sofa, advanced to Johnson, and in a kind of flutter, from imagining himself in the situation which he had just been hearing described, exclaimed, "Well, you acquitted yourself in this conversation better than I should have done; for I should have bowed and stammered through the whole of it."

Soon afterwards, he supped at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in the Strand, with a company whom I collected to meet him. When I called upon Dr. Johnson next morning, I found him highly satisfied with his colloquial prowess the preceding evening. "Well, (said he,) we had good talk." Boswell. "Yes, Sir, you tossed and gored several persons."

To obviate all the reflections which have gone round the world to Johnson's prejudice, by applying to him the epithet of a *bear*, let me impress upon my readers a just and happy saying of my friend Goldsmith, who knew him well: "Johnson, to be sure, has a roughness in his manner: but no man alive has a more tender heart. *He has nothing of the bear but his skin.*"

On the 30th of September [1769] we dined together at the Mitre. Talking of a London life, he said, "The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom." Boswell. "The only disadvantage is the great distance at which people live from one another." Johnson. "Yes, Sir, but that is occasioned by the largeness of it, which is the cause of all the other advantages." Boswell. "Sometimes I have been in the humor of wishing to retire to a desert." Johnson. "Sir, you have desert enough in Scotland."

We drank tea with Mrs. Williams. I had last year the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Thrale at Dr. Johnson's one morning, and had conversation enough with her to admire her talents; and to show her that I was as Johnsonian as herself. Dr. Johnson had probably been kind enough to speak well of me, for this evening he delivered me a very polite card from Mr. Thrale and her, inviting me to Streatham.

On the 6th of October I complied with this obliging invitation, and found at an elegant villa, six miles from town, every circumstance that can make society pleasing. Johnson, though quite at home, was yet looked up to with an awe, tempered by affection, and seemed to be equally the care of his host and hostess. I rejoiced at seeing him so happy.

He played off his wit against Scotland with a good-humoured pleasantry, which gave me, though no bigot to national prejudices, an opportunity for a little contest with him. I having said that England was obliged to us for gardeners, almost all their good gardeners being Scotchmen; — Johnson. "Why, Sir, that is because gardening is much more necessary amongst you than with us, which makes so many of your people learn it. It is *all* gardening with you. Things which grow wild here, must be cultivated with great care in Scotland. Pray now (throwing himself back in his chair and laughing,) are you ever able to bring the *sloe* to perfection?"

I boasted that we had the honor of being the first to abolish

the unhospitable, troublesome, and ungracious custom of giving vails to servants. Johnson. "Sir, you abolished vails, because you were too poor to be able to give them."

He honored me with his company at dinner on the 16th of October, at my lodgings in Old Bond-street, with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Garrick, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Bickerstaff, and Mr. Thomas Davies. Garrick played round him with a fond vivacity, taking hold of the breasts of his coat, and, looking up in his face with a lively archness, complimented him on the good health which he seemed then to enjoy; while the sage, shaking his head, beheld him with a gentle complacency. One of the company not being come at the appointed hour, I proposed, as usual upon such occasions, to order dinner to be served; adding, "Ought six people to be kept waiting for one?" "Why, yes, (answered Johnson, with a delicate humanity,) if the one will suffer more by your sitting down, than the six will do by waiting." Goldsmith, to divert the tedious minutes, strutted about, bragging of his dress, and I believe was seriously vain of it, for his mind was wonderfully prone to such impressions. "Come, come, (said Garrick,) talk no more of that. You are perhaps, the worst — eh, eh!" — Goldsmith was eagerly attempting to interrupt him, when Garrick went on, laughing ironically, "Nay, you will always *look* like a gentleman; but I am talking of being well or *ill drest*." "Well, let me tell you, (said Goldsmith,) when my tailor brought home my bloom-colored coat, he said, 'Sir, I have a favor to beg of you. When anybody asks you who made your clothes, be pleased to mention John Filby, at the Harrow, in Water-lane!'" Johnson. "Why Sir, that was because he knew the strange color would attract crowds to gaze at it, and thus they might hear of him, and see how well he could make a coat even of so absurd a color."

After dinner our conversation first turned upon Pope. Johnson said, his characters of men were admirably drawn, those of women not so well. He repeated to us, in his forcible melodious manner, the concluding lines of *The Dunciad*. While he was talking loudly in praise of those lines one of

the company ventured to say, "Too fine for such a poem: — a poem on what?" Johnson, (with a disdainful look,) "Why, on *dunces*. It was worth while being a dunce then. Ah, Sir, hadst *thou* lived in those days! It is not worth while being a dunce now, when there are no wits." Bickerstaff observed as a peculiar circumstance, that Pope's fame was higher when he was alive than it was then. Johnson said, his *Pastorals* were poor things, though the versification was fine. He told us, with high satisfaction, the anecdote of Pope's enquiring who was the author of his *London*, and saying, he will be soon *deterré*. He observed, that in Dryden's poetry there were passages drawn from a profundity which Pope could never reach. He repeated some fine lines on love, by the former, (which I have now forgotten,) and gave great applause to the character of Zimri. Goldsmith said, that Pope's character of Addison showed a deep knowledge of the human heart. Johnson said, that the description of the temple, in *The Mourning Bride*, was the finest poetical passage he had ever read; he recollected none in Shakespeare equal to it.

I told him that I had dined lately at Foote's, who showed me a letter which he had received from Tom Davies, telling him that he had not been able to sleep from the concern he felt on account of "*This sad affair of Baretti*," begging of him to try if he could suggest anything that might be of service; and, at the same time, recommending to him an industrious young man who kept a pickle shop. Johnson. "Ay, Sir, here you have a specimen of human sympathy; a friend hanged, and a cucumber pickled. We know not whether Baretti or the pickle man has kept Davies from sleep: nor does he know himself. And as to his not sleeping, Sir; Tom Davies is a very great man; Tom has been upon the stage; and knows how to do these things. I have not been upon the stage, and cannot do those things." Boswell. "I have often blamed myself, Sir, for not feeling for others, as sensibly as many say they do." Johnson. "Sir, don't be duped by them any more. You will find these very feeling people are not very ready to do you good. They *pay* you by *feeling*."

There was a pretty large circle this evening. Dr. Johnson was in very good humor, lively, and ready to talk upon all subjects. Mr. Fergusson, the self-taught philosopher, told him of a new invented machine which went without horses: a man who sat in it turned a handle, which worked a spring that drove it forward. "Then, Sir, (said Johnson,) what is gained is, the man has his choice whether he will move himself alone, or himself and the machine too." Dominicetti being mentioned, he would not allow him any merit. "There is nothing in all this boasted system. No, Sir; medicated baths can be no better than warm water: their only effect can be that of tepid moisture." One of the company took the other side, maintaining that medicines of various sorts, and some too of most powerful effect, are introduced into the human frame by the medium of the pores; and, therefore, when warm water is impregnated with salutiferous substances, it may produce great effects as a bath. This appeared to me very satisfactory. Johnson did not answer it; but talking for victory, and determined to be master of the field, he had recourse to the device which Goldsmith imputed to him in the witty words of one of Cibber's comedies: "There is no arguing with Johnson; for when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it." He turned to the gentleman, "Well, Sir, go to Dominicetti, and get thyself fumigated; but be sure that the steam be directed to thy *head*, for *that* is the *peccant part*." This produced a triumphant roar of laughter from the motley assembly of philosophers, printers, and dependents, male and female.

When we were alone, I introduced the subject of death, and endeavored to maintain that the fear of it might be got over. I told him that David Hume said to me, he was no more uneasy to think he should *not be* after his life, than that he *had not been* before he began to exist. Johnson. "Sir, if he really thinks so, his perceptions are disturbed; he is mad; if he does not think so, he lies. He may tell you he holds his finger in the flame of a candle without feeling pain; would you believe him? When he dies, he at least gives up all he has." Boswell. "Foote, Sir, told me, that when he was

very ill he was not afraid to die." Johnson. "It is not true, Sir. Hold a pistol to Foote's breast, or to Hume's breast, and threaten to kill them, and you'll see how they behave." Boswell. "But may we not fortify our minds for the approach of death?" — Here I am sensible I was in the wrong, to bring before his view what he ever looked upon with horror; for although when in a celestial frame of mind in his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, he has supposed death to be "kind Nature's signal for retreat," from this state of being to "a happier seat," his thoughts upon this awful change were in general full of dismal apprehensions. His mind resembled the vast amphitheatre, the Coliseum at Rome. In the centre stood his judgment, which like a mighty gladiator, combated those apprehensions that, like the wild beasts of the Arena, were all around in cells, ready to be let out upon him. After a conflict, he drives them back into their dens; but not killing them, they were still assailing him. To my question, whether we might not fortify our minds for the approach of death, he answered, in a passion, "No, Sir, let it alone. It matters not how a man dies, but how he lives. The act of dying is not of importance, it lasts so short a time." He added (with an earnest look,) "A man knows it must be so, and submits. It will do him no good to whine."

I attempted to continue the conversation. He was so provoked, that he said: "Give us no more of this;" and was thrown into such a state of agitation, that he expressed himself in a way that alarmed and distressed me; showed an impatience that I should leave him, and when I was going away, called to me sternly, "Don't let us meet to-morrow."

I went home exceedingly uneasy. All the harsh observations which I had ever heard made upon his character, crowded into my mind, and I seemed to myself like the man who had put his head into the lion's mouth a great many times with perfect safety, but at last had it bit off.

Next morning I sent him a note, stating that I might have been in the wrong, but it was not intentionally; he was therefore, I could not help thinking, too severe upon me. That notwithstanding our agreement not to meet that day, I would

call on him in my way to the city, and stay five minutes by my watch. "You are, (said I,) in my mind, since last night, surrounded with cloud and storm. Let me have a glimpse of sunshine, and go about my affairs in serenity and cheerfulness."

Upon entering his study, I was glad that he was not alone, which would have made our meeting more awkward. There were with him Mr. Steevens and Mr. Tyers, both of whom I now saw for the first time. My note had, on his own reflection, softened him, for he received me very complacently; so that I unexpectedly found myself at ease; and joined in the conversation.

¹ "His general mode of life, during my acquaintance, seemed to be pretty uniform. About twelve o'clock I commonly visited him, and frequently found him in bed, or declaiming over his tea, which he drank very plentifully. He generally had a levee of morning visitors chiefly men of letters; Hawkesworth, Goldsmith, Murphy, Langton, Steevens, Beauclerk, &c. &c., and sometimes learned ladies; particularly I remember a French lady of wit and fashion doing him the honor of a visit. He seemed to me to be considered as a kind of public oracle, whom everybody thought they had a right to visit and consult; and doubtless they were well rewarded. I never could discover how he found time for his compositions. He declaimed all the morning, then went to dinner at a tavern, where he commonly stayed late, and then drank his tea at some friend's house, over which he loitered a great while, but seldom took supper. I fancy he must have read and wrote chiefly in the night, for I can scarcely recollect that he ever refused going with me to a tavern, and he often went to Ranelagh, which he deemed a place of innocent recreation.

"He frequently gave all the silver in his pocket to the poor, who watched him, between his house and the tavern where he dined. He walked the streets at all hours, and said he was never robbed, for the rogues knew he had little money, nor had the appearance of having much.

"Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, he said, was the only

¹ From recollections supplied by the Rev. Dr. Maxwell, of Falkland, Ireland.

book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise.

"When exasperated by contradiction, he was apt to treat his opponents with too much acrimony: as, 'Sir, you don't see your way through that question:' — 'Sir, you talk the language of ignorance.' On my observing to him that a certain gentleman had remained silent the whole evening, in the midst of a very brilliant and learned society, 'Sir, (said he,) the conversation overflowed, and drowned him.'

"Speaking of a dull tiresome fellow, whom we chanced to meet, he said, 'That fellow seems to me to possess but one idea, and that is a wrong one.'

"Much enquiry having been made concerning a gentleman, who had quitted a company where Johnson was, and no information being obtained; at last Johnson observed, that 'he did not care to speak ill of any man behind his back, but he believed the gentleman was an *attorney*.'

"He spoke with much contempt of the notice taken of Woodhouse, the poetical shoemaker. He said, it was all vanity and childishness, and that such objects were, to those who patronized them, mere mirrors of their own superiority. 'They had better (said he,) furnish the man with good implements for his trade, than raise subscriptions for his poems. He may make an excellent shoemaker, but can never make a good poet. A school-boy's exercise may be a pretty thing for a school-boy; but it is no treat for a man.'

"A gentleman who had been very unhappy in marriage, married immediately after his wife died: Johnson said, it was the triumph of hope over experience.

"He observed that a man of sense and education should meet a suitable companion in a wife. It was a miserable thing when the conversation could only be such as, whether the mutton should be boiled or roasted, and probably a dispute about that.

"He did not approve of late marriages, observing that more was lost in point of time, than compensated for by any possible advantages. Even ill-assorted marriages were preferable to cheerless celibacy."

CHAPTER VIII (1772-1773)

JOHNSON ON MANY TOPICS

Johnson on Certain English Words — On Fielding — On Ghosts — On Goldsmith — On Garrick — On Scotland — Johnson Corresponds with an American — Johnson on Gesticulation — On Lord Chesterfield — Boswell Dines with Johnson — On Goldsmith Again — Boswell Admitted to The Club — Goldsmith Again — Anecdotes of Goldsmith.

ON Monday, March 23, I found him busy, preparing a fourth edition of his folio *Dictionary*. Mr. Peton, one of his original amanuenses, was writing for him. I put him in mind of a meaning of the word *side*, which he had omitted, viz., relationship; as father's side, mother's side. He inserted it. I asked him if *humiliating* was a good word. He said, he had seen it frequently used, but he did not know it to be legitimate English. He would not admit *civilization*, but only *civility*. With great deference to him I thought *civilization*, from *to civilize*, better in the sense opposed to *barbarity* than *civility*; as it is better to have a distinct word for each sense, than one word with two senses, which *civility* is, in his way of using it.

Dr. Johnson went home with me to my lodgings in Conduit-street and drank tea, previous to our going to the Pantheon, which neither of us had seen before.

He said, "Goldsmith's *Life of Parnell* is poor; not that it is poorly written, but that he had poor materials; for nobody can write the life of a man, but those who have eat and drunk and lived in social intercourse with him."

I said, that if it was not troublesome and presuming too much, I would request him to tell me all the little circumstances of his life; what schools he attended, when he came to Oxford, when he came to London, &c. &c. He did not disapprove of my curiosity as to these particulars, but said, "They'll come out by degrees, as we talk together."

Fielding being mentioned, Johnson exclaimed, "He was a

blockhead;" and upon my expressing my astonishment at so strange an assertion, he said, "What I mean by his being a blockhead is, that he was a barren rascal." Boswell. "Will you not allow, Sir, that he draws very natural pictures of human life?" Johnson. "Why, Sir, it is of very low life. Richardson used to say, that had he not known who Fielding was, he should have believed he was an ostler. Sir, there is more knowledge of the heart in one letter of Richardson's than in all *Tom Jones*. I, indeed, never read *Joseph Andrews*." Erskine. "Surely, Sir, Richardson is very tedious." Johnson. "Why, Sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, your impatience would be so much fretted that you would hang yourself. But you must read him for the sentiment, and consider the story as only giving occasion to the sentiment." — I have already given my opinion of Fielding; but I cannot refrain from repeating here my wonder at Johnson's excessive and unaccountable depreciation of one of the best writers that England has produced. *Tom Jones* has stood the test of public opinion with such success, as to have established its great merit, both for the story, the sentiments, and the manners, and also the varieties of diction, so as to leave no doubt of its having an animated truth of execution throughout.

On Thursday, April 9, I called on him to beg he would go and dine with me at the Mitre tavern. He had resolved not to dine at all this day, I know not for what reason; and I was so unwilling to be deprived of his company, that I was content to submit to suffer a want, which was at first somewhat painful, but he soon made me forget it; and a man is always pleased with himself, when he finds his intellectual inclinations predominate.

Talking of ghosts, he said, he knew one friend, who was an honest man and a sensible man, who told him he had seen a ghost; old Mr. Edward Cave, the printer at St. John's Gate. He said, Mr. Cave did not like to talk of it, and seemed to be in great horror whenever it was mentioned. Boswell. "Pray, Sir, what did he say was the appearance?" Johnson. "Why, Sir, something of a shadowy being."

On Friday, April 10, I dined with him at General Oglethorpe's, where we found Dr. Goldsmith.

The General told us, that when he was a very young man, I think, only fifteen, serving under Prince Eugene of Savoy, he was sitting in a company at table with a Prince of Würtemberg. The Prince took up a glass of wine, and, by a fillip, made some of it fly in Oglethorpe's face. Here was a nice dilemma. To have challenged him instantly might have fixed a quarrelsome character upon the young soldier: to have taken no notice of it might have been considered as cowardice. Oglethorpe, therefore, keeping his eye upon the Prince, and smiling all the time, as if he took what his Highness had done in jest, said "Mon Prince — " (I forget the French words he used, the purport however was,) "that's a good joke: but we do it much better in England;" and threw a whole glass of wine in the Prince's face. An old General who sat by, said "*Il a bien fait, mon Prince; vous l'avez commencé:*"¹ and thus all ended in good humor.

Dr. Johnson said, "Pray, General, give us an account of the siege of Belgrade." Upon which the General, pouring a little wine upon the table, described everything with a wet finger: "Here we were, here were the Turks," &c. &c. Johnson listened with the closest attention.

On Saturday, April 11, he appointed me to come to him in the evening.

Of our friend Goldsmith he said, "Sir, he is so much afraid of being unnoticed, that he often talks merely lest you should forget that he is in the company." Boswell. "Yes, he stands forward." Johnson. "True, Sir; but if a man is to stand forward, he should wish to do it not in an awkward posture, not in rags, not so as that he shall only be exposed to ridicule." Boswell. "For my part, I like very well to hear honest Goldsmith talk away carelessly." Johnson. "Why yes, Sir; but he should not like to hear himself."

I paid him short visits both on Friday and Saturday, and seeing his large folio Greek Testament before him, beheld him with a reverential awe, and would not intrude upon his time.

¹ He has acted properly, Prince; you started it.

While he was thus employed to such good purpose, and while his friends in their intercourse with him constantly found a vigorous intellect and a lively imagination, it is melancholy to read in his private register, "My mind is unsettled and my memory confused. I have of late turned my thoughts with a very useless earnestness upon past incidents. I have yet got no command over my thoughts; an unpleasing incident is almost certain to hinder my rest." What philosophic heroism was it in him to appear with such manly fortitude to the world, while he was inwardly so distressed! We may surely believe that the mysterious principle of being "made perfect through suffering," was to be strongly exemplified in him.

While I remained in London this spring, I was with him at several other times, both by himself and in company. I dined with him one day at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in the Strand, with Lord Elibank, Mr. Langton, and Dr. Vansittart of Oxford. Without specifying each particular day, I have preserved the following memorable things.

I regretted the reflection in his Preface to Shakespeare against Garrick, to whom we cannot but apply the following passage: "I collated such copies as I could procure, and wished for more, but have not found the collectors of these rarities very communicative." I told him, that Garrick had complained to me of it, and had vindicated himself by assuring me, that Johnson was made welcome to the full use of his collection, and that he left the key of it with a servant, with orders to have a fire and every convenience for him. I found Johnson's notion was, that Garrick wanted to be courted for them, and that, on the contrary, Garrick should have courted him, and sent him the plays of his own accord. But, indeed, considering the slovenly and careless manner in which books were treated by Johnson, it could not be expected that scarce and valuable editions should have been lent to him.

A gentleman having to some of the usual arguments for drinking added this: "You know, Sir, drinking drives away care, and makes us forget whatever is disagreeable. Would not you allow a man to drink for that reason?" Johnson. "Yes, Sir, if he sat next *you*."

He would not allow Scotland to derive any credit from Lord Mansfield; for he was educated in England. "Much (said he,) may be made of a Scotchman, if he be *caught* young."

While a former edition of my work was passing through the press, I was unexpectedly favored with a packet from Philadelphia, from Mr. James Abercrombie, a gentleman of that country, who is pleased to honor me with very high praise of my *Life of Dr. Johnson*. To have the fame of my illustrious friend, and his faithful biographer, echoed from the New World is extremely flattering; and my grateful acknowledgments shall be wafted across the Atlantic. Mr. Abercrombie has politely conferred on me a considerable additional obligation, by transmitting to me copies of two letters from Dr. Johnson to American gentlemen. "Gladly, Sir, (says he,) would I have sent you the originals; but being the only relics of the kind in America, they are considered by the possessors of such inestimable value, that no possible consideration would induce them to part with them. In some future publication of yours relative to that great and good man, they may perhaps be thought worthy of insertion."

"To Mr. B—————D.

"Sir,

"That in the hurry of a sudden departure you should yet find leisure to consult my convenience, is a degree of kindness, and an instance of regard, not only beyond my claims, but above my expectation. You are not mistaken in supposing that I set a high value on my American friends, and that you should confer a very valuable favor upon me by giving me an opportunity of keeping myself in their memory.

"I have taken the liberty of troubling you with a packet, to which I wish a safe and speedy conveyance, because I wish a safe and speedy voyage to him that conveys it. I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"London, Johnson's-court,

"Fleet-street, March 4, 1773."

"To the Reverend Mr. White.

"Dear Sir,

"Your kindness for your friends accompanies you across the Atlantic. It was long since observed by Horace, that no ship could leave care behind: you have been attended in your voyage by other powers, — by benevolence and constancy: and I hope care did not often show her face in their company.

"I received the copy of *Rasselas*. The impression is not magnificent, but it flatters an author, because the printer seems to have expected that it would be scattered among the people. The little book has been well received, and is translated into Italian, French, German, and Dutch. It has now one honor more by an American edition.

"I know not that much has happened since your departure that can engage your curiosity. Of all public transactions the whole world is now informed by the newspapers. Opposition seems to despond; and the dissenters, though they have taken advantage of unsettled times, and a government much enfeebled, seem not likely to gain any immunities.

"Dr. Goldsmith has a new comedy in rehearsal at Covent Garden, to which the manager predicts ill success. I hope he will be mistaken. I think it deserves a very kind reception.

"I shall soon publish a new edition of my large *Dictionary*: I have been persuaded to revise it, and have mended some faults, but added little to its usefulness.

"No book has been published since your departure of which much notice is taken. Faction only fills the town with pamphlets, and greater subjects are forgotten in the noise of discord.

"Thus have I written, only to tell you how little I have to tell. Of myself I can only add, that having been afflicted many weeks with a very troublesome cough, I am now recovered.

"I take the liberty which you give me of troubling you with a letter, of which you will please to fill up the direction. I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Johnson's-court, Fleet-street,
London, *March 4, 1773.*"

At Mr. Thrale's, in the evening, he repeated his usual paradoxical declamation against action in public speaking. "Action can have no effect upon reasonable minds. It may augment noise, but it never can enforce argument. If you speak to a dog, you use action; you hold up your hand thus, because he is a brute; and in proportion as men are removed from brutes, action will have the less influence upon them." Mrs. Thrale. "What then, Sir, becomes of Demosthenes's saying? 'Action, action, action!'" Johnson. "Demosthenes, Madam, spoke to an assembly of brutes; to a barbarous people."

I thought it extraordinary, that he should deny the power of rhetorical action upon human nature, when it is proved by innumerable facts in all stages of society. Reasonable beings are not solely reasonable. They have fancies which may be pleased, passions which may be roused.

Lord Chesterfield being mentioned, Johnson remarked, that almost all of that celebrated nobleman's witty sayings were puns. He, however, allowed the merit of good wit to his Lordship's saying of Lord Tyrawley and himself, when both very old and infirm: "Tyrawley and I have been dead these two years; but we don't choose to have it known."

To my great surprise he asked me to dine with him on Easterday. I never supposed that he had a dinner at his house; for I had not then heard of any one of his friends having been entertained at his table. He told me, "I have generally a meat-pie on Sunday: it is baked at a public oven, which is very properly allowed, because one man can attend it; and thus the advantage is obtained of not keeping servants from church to dress dinners."

April 11, being Easter Sunday, after having attended divine Service at St. Paul's, I repaired to Dr. Johnson's. I had gratified my curiosity much in dining with Jean Jacques Rousseau, while he lived in the wilds of Neufchatel: I had as great curiosity to dine with Dr. Samuel Johnson, in the dusky recess of a court in Fleet-street. I supposed we should scarcely have knives and forks, and only some strange, uncouth, ill-dressed dish: but I found everything in very good

order. We had no other company but Mrs. Williams and a young woman whom I did not know. As a dinner here was considered as a singular phenomenon, and as I was frequently interrogated on the subject, my readers may perhaps be desirous to know our bill of fare. Foote, I remember, in allusion to Francis, the *negro*, was willing to suppose that our repast was *black broth*. But the fact was, that we had a very good soup, a boiled leg of lamb and spinach, a veal pie, and a rice pudding.

I again solicited him to communicate to me the particulars of his early life. He said, "You shall have them all for twopence. I hope you shall know a great deal more of me before you write my Life." He mentioned to me this day many circumstances, which I wrote down when I went home, and have interwoven in the former part of this narrative.

Mr. Elphinston talked of a new book that was much admired, and asked Dr. Johnson if he had read it. Johnson. "I have looked into it." "What (said Elphinston,) have you not read it through?" Johnson, offended at being thus pressed, and so obliged to own his cursory mode of reading, answered tartly, "No, Sir; do *you* read books *through*?"

He said, "Goldsmith should not be forever attempting to shine in conversation: he has not temper for it, he is so much mortified when he fails. Sir, a game of jokes is composed partly of skill, partly of chance, a man may be beat at times by one who has not the tenth part of his wit."

Goldsmith, however, was often very fortunate in his witty contests, even when he entered the lists with Johnson himself. Sir Joshua Reynolds was in company with them one day, when Goldsmith said, that he thought he could write a good fable, mentioned the simplicity which that kind of composition requires, and observed, that in most fables the animals introduced seldom talk in character. "For instance, (said he,) the fable of the little fishes, who saw birds fly over their heads, and envying them, petitioned Jupiter to be changed into birds. The skill (continued he,) consists in making them talk like little fishes." While he indulged himself in this fanciful reverie, he observed Johnson shaking his

sides, and laughing. Upon which he smartly proceeded. "Why, Dr Johnson, this is not so easy as you seem to think; for if you were to make little fishes talk they would talk like *whales*."

On Friday, April 30, I dined with him at Mr. Beauclerk's, where were Lord Charlemont, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and some more members of the Literary Club, whom he had obligingly invited to meet me, as I was this evening to be ballotted for as candidate for admission into that distinguished society. Johnson had done me the honor to propose me, and Beauclerk was very zealous for me.

Goldsmith being mentioned; Johnson. "It is amazing how little Goldsmith knows. He seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else." Sir Joshua Reynolds. "Yet there is no man whose company is more liked." Johnson. "To be sure, Sir. When people find a man of the most distinguished abilities as a writer their inferior while he is with them, it must be highly gratifying to them. What Goldsmith comically says of himself is very true, — he always gets the better when he argues alone; meaning, that he is master of a subject in his study, and can write well upon it; but when he comes into company, grows confused, and unable to talk. Take him as a poet, his *Traveller* is a very fine performance; ay, and so is his *Deserted Village*, were it not sometimes too much the echo of his *Traveller*. Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet, — as a comic writer, — or as an historian, he stands in the first class." Boswell. "An historian! My dear Sir, you surely will not rank his compilation of the Roman History with the works of other historians of this age?" Johnson. "Why, who are before him?" Boswell. "Hume, — Robertson, — Lord Lyttelton." Johnson. (His antipathy to the Scotch beginning to rise.) "I have not read Hume; but, doubtless, Goldsmith's *History* is better than the *verbiage* of Robertson, or the foppery of Dalrymple." Boswell. "Will you not admit the superiority of Robertson, in whose *History* we find such penetration — such painting?" Johnson. "Sir, you must consider how that penetration and that painting are employed.

It is not history, it is imagination. He who describes what he never saw, draws from fancy. Robertson paints minds as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history piece: he imagines an heroic countenance. You must look upon Robertson's work as romance and try it by that standard. History it is not. Besides, Sir, it is the great excellence of a writer to put into his book as much as his book will hold. Goldsmith has done this in his *History*. Now Robertson might have put twice as much into his book. Robertson is like a man who has packed gold in wool; the wool takes up more room than the gold. No, Sir; I always thought Robertson would be crushed by his own weight, would be buried under his own ornaments. Goldsmith tells you shortly all you want to know: Robertson detains you a great deal too long. No man will read Robertson's cumbrous detail a second time; but Goldsmith's plain narrative will please again and again. I would say to Robertson what an old tutor of a college said to one of his pupils: 'Read over your compositions, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out.' Goldsmith's abridgment is better than that of Lucius Florus or Eutropius; and I will venture to say, that if you compare him with Vertot, in the same places of the Roman History, you will find that he excels Vertot. Sir, he has the art of compiling, and of saying everything he has to say in a pleasing manner. He is now writing a *Natural History*, and will make it as entertaining as a *Persian Tale*."

I cannot dismiss the present topic without observing, that it is probable that Dr. Johnson, who owned that he often "talked for victory," rather urged plausible objections to Dr. Robertson's excellent historical works, in the ardor of contest, than expressed his real and decided opinion; for it is not easy to suppose, that he should so widely differ from the rest of the literary world.

The gentlemen went away to their club, and I was left at Beauclerk's till the fate of my election should be announced to me. I sat in a state of anxiety which even the charming conversation of Lady Di Beauclerk could not entirely dissi-

pate. In a short time I received the agreeable intelligence that I was chosen. I hastened to the place of meeting and was introduced to such a society as can seldom be found: Mr. Edmund Burke, whom I then saw for the first time, and whose splendid talents had long made me ardently wish for his acquaintance; Dr. Nugent, Mr. Garrick, Dr. Goldsmith, Mr. (afterwards Sir William) Jones, and the company with whom I had dined. Upon my entrance, Johnson placed himself behind a chair, on which he leaned as on a desk or pulpit, and with humorous formality gave me a *Charge*, pointing out the conduct expected from me as a good member of this club.

On Saturday, May 1, we dined by ourselves at our old rendezvous, the Mitre tavern. He was placid, but not much disposed to talk. He observed, that "the Irish mix better with the English than the Scotch do; their language is nearer to English; as a proof of which, they succeed very well as players, which Scotchmen do not. Then, Sir, they have not that extreme nationality which we find in the Scotch. I will do you, Boswell, the justice to say, that you are the most *unscottified* of your countrymen. You are almost the only instance of a Scotchman that I have known, who did not at every other sentence bring in some other Scotchman."

In our way to the club to-night, when I regretted that Goldsmith would, upon every occasion, endeavor to shine, by which he often exposed himself, Mr. Langton observed, that he was not like Addison, who was content with the fame of his writings, and did not aim also at excellency in conversation, for which he found himself unfit; and that he said to a lady who complained of his having talked little in company, "Madam, I have but nine-pence in ready money, but I can draw for a thousand pounds." I observed that Goldsmith had a great deal of gold in his cabinet, but, not content with that, was always taking out his purse. Johnson. "Yes, Sir, and that so often an empty purse!"

Goldsmith's incessant desire of being conspicuous in company, was the occasion of his sometimes appearing to such disadvantage as one should hardly have supposed possible

in a man of his genius. When his literary reputation had risen deservedly high, and his society was much courted, he became very jealous of the extraordinary attention which was everywhere paid to Johnson. One evening, in a circle of wits, he found fault with me for talking of Johnson as entitled to the honor of unquestionable superiority. "Sir, (said he,) you are for making a monarchy of what should be a republic."

He was still more mortified, when talking in a company with fluent vivacity, and, as he flattered himself, to the admiration of all who were present, a German who sat next him, and perceived Johnson rolling himself, as if about to speak, suddenly stopped him, saying, "Stay, stay, — Toctor Shonson is going to say something." This was, no doubt, very provoking, especially to one so irritable as Goldsmith, who frequently mentioned it with strong expressions of indignation.

It may also be observed, that Goldsmith was sometimes content to be treated with an easy familiarity, but upon occasions, would be consequential and important. An instance of this occurred in a small particular. Johnson had a way of contracting the names of his friends; as Beauclerk, Beau; Boswell, Bozzy; Langton, Lanky; Murphy, Mur; Sheridan, Sherry. I remember one day, when Tom Davies was telling that Dr. Johnson said, "We are all in labor for a name to *Goldy's* play," Goldsmith seemed displeased that such a liberty should be taken with his name, and said, "I have often desired him not to call me *Goldy*." Tom was remarkably attentive to the most minute circumstance about Johnson. I recollect his telling me once, on my arrival in London, "Sir, our great friend has made an improvement on his appellation of old Mr. Sheridan. He calls him now *Sherry derry*."

CHAPTER IX (1773-1776)

JOHNSON'S JOURNEYS TO THE HEBRIDES AND FRANCE

Johnson Agrees to Go to the Hebrides — His Stay in Scotland — Return to London — Mrs. Boswell and Johnson — Johnson's Account of the Tour — Boswell on England's Relations with America — The Altercation with Macpherson — Johnson's Physical Courage — His Treatment of Offenders — *The Journey to the Western Islands* — Johnson's *Taxation No Tyranny* — Boswell's Criticism — Mr. Strahan's Apprentice — Johnson and the Seville Oranges — Johnson on Patriotism — On Himself as Good-Humored — On *The Spectator* — Johnson's Love of Merriment — His Charitableness — Letters to Boswell — The Tour to France — Johnson on French Customs.

IN a letter from Edinburgh, dated the 29th of May, I pressed him to persevere in his resolution to make this year the projected visit to the Hebrides, of which he and I had talked for many years, and which I was confident would afford us much entertainment.

"To James Boswell, Esq.

"Dear Sir,

"When your letter came to me, I was so darkened by an inflammation in my eye that I could not for some time read it. I can now write without trouble, and can read large prints. My eye is gradually growing stronger; and I hope will be able to take some delight in the survey of a Caledonian loch.

"Chambers is going a Judge, with six thousand a year, to Bengal. He and I shall come down together as far as Newcastle, and thence I shall easily get to Edinburgh. Let me know the exact time when your Courts intermit. I must conform a little to Chambers's occasions, and he must conform a little to mine. The time which you shall fix, must be the common point to which we will come as near as we can. Except this eye, I am very well.

"Beattie is so caressed, and invited, and treated, and liked, and flattered, by the great, that I can see nothing of him. I am in great hope that he will be well provided for, and then we will live upon him at the Marischal College, without pity or modesty.

". . . left the town without taking leave of me, and is gone in deep dudgeon to Is not this very childish? Where is now my legacy?

"I hope your dear lady and her dear baby are both well. I shall see them too when I come; and I have that opinion of your choice, as to suspect that when I have seen Mrs. Boswell, I shall be less willing to go away.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your affectionate humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"Johnson's-court, Fleet-street,

"*July 5, 1773.*"

"Write to me as soon as you can. Chambers is now at Oxford."

I again wrote to him, informing him that the Court of Session rose on the twelfth of August, hoping to see him before that time, and expressing, perhaps in too extravagant terms, my admiration of him, and my expectation of pleasure from our intended tour.

"*To James Boswell, Esq.*

"*Dear Sir,*

"I shall set out from London on Friday the sixth of this month, and purpose not to loiter much by the way. Which day I shall be at Edinburgh, I cannot exactly tell. I suppose I must drive to an inn, and send a porter to find you.

"I am afraid Beattie will not be at his College soon enough for us, and I shall be sorry to miss him; but there is no staying for the concurrence of all conveniences. We will do as well as we can. I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"*August 3, 1773.*"

To the Same.

"Dear Sir,

"Not being at Mr. Thrale's when your letter came, I had written the enclosed paper and sealed it; bringing it hither for a frank, I found yours. If anything could repress my ardor, it would be such a letter as yours. To disappoint a friend is displeasing: and he that forms expectations like yours, must be disappointed. Think only when you see me, that you see a man who loves you, and is proud and glad that you love him. I am, Sir,

"Your most affectionate,

"August 3, 1773."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

His stay in Scotland was from the 18th of August, on which day he arrived, till the 22d of November, when he set out on his return to London; and I believe ninety-four days were never passed by any man in a more vigorous exertion.

He came by the way of Berwick upon Tweed to Edinburgh, where he remained a few days, and then went by St. Andrews, Aberdeen, Inverness, and Fort Augustus, to the Hebrides, to visit which was the principal object he had in view. He visited the isles of Skye, Rasay, Coll, Mull, Inchkenneth, and Icolmkill. He travelled through Argyleshire by Inveraray, and from thence by Lochlomond and Dumbarton to Glasgow, then by London to Auchinleck in Ayrshire, the seat of my family, and then by Hamilton, back to Edinburgh, where he again spent some time. He thus saw the four Universities of Scotland, its three principal cities, and as much of the Highland and insular life as was sufficient for his philosophical contemplation. I had the pleasure of accompanying him during the whole of his journey. He was respectfully entertained by the great, the learned, and the elegant, wherever he went; nor was he less delighted with the hospitality which he experienced in humbler life.

His various adventures, and the force and vivacity of his mind, as exercised during this peregrination, upon innumerable topics, have been faithfully, and to the best of my abilities, displayed in my *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, to

which, as the public has been pleased to honor it by a very extensive circulation, I beg leave to refer, as to a separate and remarkable portion of his life, which may be there seen in detail, and which exhibits as striking a view of his powers in conversation, as his works do of his excellence in writing.

During his stay at Edinburgh, after his return from the Hebrides, he was at great pains to obtain information concerning Scotland; and it will appear from his subsequent letters, that he was not less solicitous for intelligence on this subject after his return to London.

"To James Boswell, Esq.

"Dear Sir,

"I came home last night, without any incommmodity, danger, or weariness, and am ready to begin a new journey. I shall go to Oxford on Monday. I know Mrs. Boswell wished me well to go; her wishes have not been disappointed.¹ Mrs. Williams has received Sir A.'s letter.

"Make my compliments to all those to whom my compliments may be welcome.

"Let the box be sent as soon as it can, and let me know when to expect it.

"Enquire, if you can, the order of the Clans: Macdonald is first, Maclean second; further I cannot go. Quicken Dr. Webster.

"I am, Sir,

"Yours affectionately,

"November 27, 1773."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

¹ In this he showed a very acute penetration. My wife paid him the most assiduous and respectful attention, while he was our guest; so that I wonder how he discovered her wishing for his departure. The truth is, that his irregular hours and uncouth habits, such as turning the candles with their heads downward, when they did not burn bright enough, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet, could not but be disagreeable to a lady. Besides, she had not that high admiration of him which was felt by most of those who knew him; and what was very natural to a female mind, she thought he had too much influence over her husband. She once in a little warmth made, with more point than justice, this remark upon that subject: "I have seen many a bear led by a man; but I never before saw a man led by a bear."

"To James Boswell, Esq.

"Dear Sir,

"I long to hear how you like the book;¹ it is, I think, much liked here. But Macpherson is very furious; can you give me any more intelligence about him, or his Fingal? Do what you can, and do it quickly. Is Lord Hailes on our side?

"Pray let me know what I owed you when I left you, that I may send it to you.

"I am going to write about the Americans. If you have picked up any hints among your lawyers, who are great masters of the law of nations, or if your own mind suggest anything, let me know. But mum, it is a secret.

"I will send your parcel of books as soon as I can; but I cannot do as I wish. However, you find everything mentioned in the book which you recommended.

"Langton is here; we are all that ever we were. He is a worthy fellow, without malice, though not without resentment.

"Poor Beauclerk is so ill, that his life is thought to be in danger. Lady Di nurses him with very great assiduity.

"Reynolds has taken too much to strong liquor, and seems to delight in his new character.

"This is all the news that I have; but as you love verses, I will send you a few which I made upon Inchkenneth; but remember the condition, you shall not show them, except to Lord Hailes, whom I love better than any man whom I know so little. If he asks you to transcribe them for him, you may do it, but I think he must promise not to let them be copied again, nor to show them as mine.

"I have at last sent back Lord Hailes's sheets. I never think about returning them, because I alter nothing. You will see that I might as well have kept them. However, I am ashamed of my delay; and if I have the honor of receiving any more, promise punctually to return them by the next post. Make my compliments to dear Mrs. Boswell, and to Miss Veronica. I am, dear Sir,

"Yours most faithfully,

"Jan. 1, 1775."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

¹ Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*.

"Mr. Boswell to Dr. Johnson.

"Edinburgh, Jan. 27, 1775.

" . . . You rate our lawyers here too high, when you call them great masters of the law of nations. . . .

"As for myself, I am ashamed to say I have read little and thought little on the subject of America. I will be much obliged to you, if you will direct me where I shall find the best information of what is to be said on both sides. It is a subject vast in its present extent and future consequences. The imperfect hints which now float in my mind tend rather to the formation of an opinion that our government has been precipitant and severe in the resolutions taken against the Bostonians. Well do you know that I have no kindness for that race. But nations, or bodies of men, should, as well as individuals, have a fair trial, and not be condemned on character alone. Have we not express contracts with our colonies, which afford a more certain foundation of judgment than general political speculations on the mutual rights of States and their provinces or colonies? Pray let me know immediately what to read, and I shall diligently endeavor to gather for you anything that I can find. Is Burke's speech on American taxation published by himself? Is it authentic? I remember to have heard you say, that you had never considered East Indian affairs: though, surely, they are of much importance to Great Britain. Under the recollection of this, I shelter myself from the reproach of ignorance about the Americans. If you write upon the subject, I shall certainly understand it. But, since you seem to expect that I should know something of it, without your instruction, and that my own mind should suggest something, I trust you will put me in the way."

What words were used by Mr. Macpherson in his letter to the venerable Sage, I have never heard; but they are generally said to have been of a nature very different from the language of literary contest. Dr. Johnson's answer appeared in the newspapers of the day, and has since been frequently republished; but not with perfect accuracy. I give it as dictated to me by himself, written down in his presence, and

authenticated by a note in his own handwriting, "*This, I think, is a true copy.*"

"*Mr. James Macpherson,*

"I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

"What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the public, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

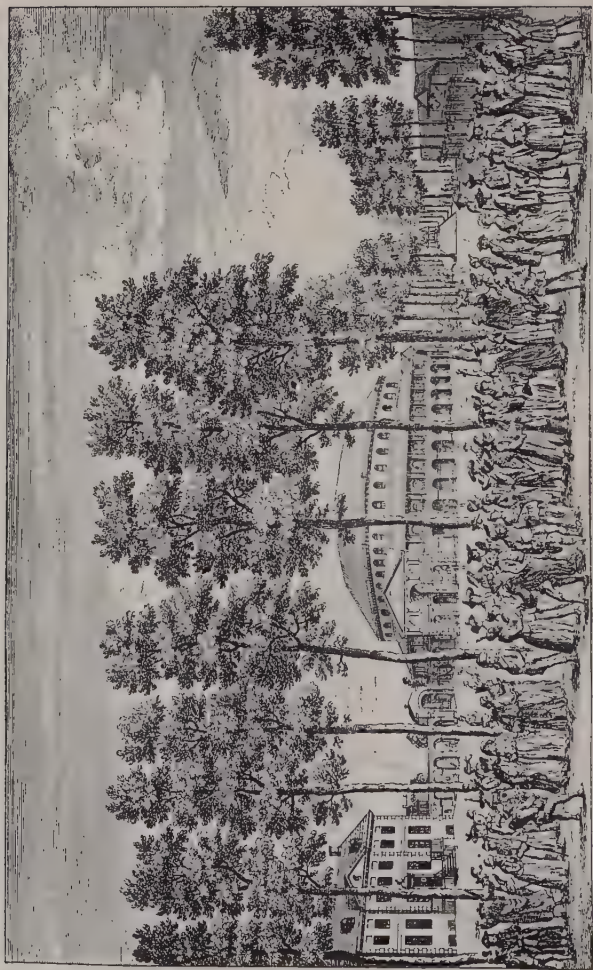
Mr. Macpherson little knew the character of Dr. Johnson, if he supposed that he could be easily intimidated; for no man was ever more remarkable for personal courage. He had, indeed, an awful dread of death, or rather, "of something after death;" and what rational man, who seriously thinks of quitting all that he has ever known, and going into a new and unknown state of being, can be without that dread? But his fear was from reflection; his courage natural. His fear, in that one instance, was the result of philosophical and religious consideration. He feared death, but he feared nothing else, not even what might occasion death. Many instances of his resolution may be mentioned. One day, at Mr. Beauclerk's house in the country, when two large dogs were fighting, he went up to them, and beat them till they separated; and at another time, when told of the danger there was that a gun might burst if charged with many balls, he put in six or seven and fired it off against a wall. Mr. Langton told me, that when they were swimming together near Oxford, he cautioned Dr. Johnson against a pool, which was reckoned particularly dangerous; upon which Johnson directly swam into it. He told me himself that one night he

was attacked in the street by four men, to whom he would not yield, but kept them all at bay, till the watch came up, and carried both him and them to the round house. In the play-house at Lichfield, as Mr. Garrick informed me, Johnson having for a moment quitted a chair which was placed for him between the side scenes, a gentleman took possession of it, and when Johnson on his return civilly demanded his seat, rudely refused to give it up; upon which Johnson laid hold of it, and tossed him and the chair into the pit. Foote, who so successfully revived the old comedy, by exhibiting living characters, had resolved to imitate Johnson on the stage, expecting great profits from his ridicule of so celebrated a man. Johnson being informed of his intention, and being at dinner at Mr. Thomas Davies's the bookseller, from whom I had the story, he asked Mr. Davies "what was the common price of an oak stick;" and being answered six-pence, "Why, then, Sir, (said he,) give me leave to send your servant to purchase me a shilling one. I'll have a double quantity; for I am told Foote means to *take me off*, as he calls it, and I am determined the fellow shall not do it with impunity." Davies took care to acquaint Foote of this, which effectually checked the wantonness of the mimic. Mr. Macpherson's menaces made Johnson provide himself with the same implement of defence; and had he been attacked, I have no doubt that, old as he was, he would have made his corporal prowess be felt as much as his intellectual.

His *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* is a most valuable performance. It abounds in extensive philosophical views of society, and in ingenious sentiment and lively description. A considerable part of it, indeed, consists of speculations, which many years before he saw the wild regions which we visited together, probably had employed his attention, though the actual sight of those scenes undoubtedly quickened and augmented them. Mr. Orme, the very able historian, agreed with me in this opinion, which he thus strongly expressed:—"There are in that book thoughts, which, by long revolution in the great mind of Johnson, have been formed and polished like pebbles rolled in the ocean!"



DR. JOHNSON IN TRAVELING DRESS



RANELAGH HOUSE

A celebrated pleasure garden which, with Vauxhall, was one of the show places of London in the eighteenth century. From an old print

That he was to some degree of excess a *true-born Englishman*, so as to have entertained an undue prejudice against both the country and the people of Scotland, must be allowed. But it was a prejudice of the head and not of the heart. He had no ill will to the Scotch; for, if he had been conscious of that he never would have thrown himself into the bosom of their country, and trusted to the protection of its remote inhabitants with a fearless confidence. His remark upon the nakedness of the country, from its being denuded of trees, was made after having travelled two hundred miles along the Eastern coast, where certainly trees are not to be found near the road; and he said it was "a map of the road" which he gave. His disbelief of the authenticity of the poems ascribed to Ossian, a Highland bard, was confirmed in the course of his journey, by a very strict examination of the evidence offered for it; and although their authenticity was made too much a national point by the Scotch, there were many respectable persons in that country, who did not concur in this: so that his judgment upon the question ought not to be decied, even by those who differ from him.

The doubts which, in my correspondence with him, I had ventured to state as to the justice and wisdom of the conduct of Great Britain towards the American colonies, while I at the same time requested that he would enable me to inform myself upon that momentous subject, he had altogether disregarded; and had recently published a pamphlet, entitled *Taxation no Tyranny; an answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress*.

He had long before indulged most unfavorable sentiments of our fellow subjects in America. For, as early as 1769, I was told by Dr. John Campbell, that he had said of them, "Sir, they are a race of convicts, and ought to be thankful for anything we allow them short of hanging."

Of this performance I avoided to talk with him; for I had now formed a clear and settled opinion, that the people of America were well warranted to resist a claim that their fellow-subjects in the mother country should have the entire command of their fortunes, by taxing them without their

own consent; and the extreme violence which it breathed appeared to me so unsuitable to the mildness of a Christian philosopher, and so directly opposite to the principles of peace which he had so beautifully recommended in his pamphlet respecting Falkland's Islands, that I was sorry to see him appear in so unfavorable a light. Besides, I could not perceive in it that ability of argument, or that felicity of expression, for which he was, upon other occasions, so eminent. Positive assertion, sarcastical severity, and extravagant ridicule, which he himself reprobated as a test of truth, were united in this rhapsody.

That this pamphlet was written at the desire of those who were then in power, I have no doubt; and, indeed, he owned to me, that it had been revised and curtailed by some of them. He told me, that they had struck out one passage, which was to this effect: "That the Colonists could with no solidity argue from their not having been taxed while in their infancy, that they should not now be taxed. We do not put a calf into the plow; we wait till he is an ox." He said, "They struck it out either critically as too ludicrous, or politically as too exasperating. I care not which. It was their business. If an architect says, I will build five stories, and the man who employs him says, I will have only three, the employer is to decide." "Yes, Sir, (said I,) in ordinary cases. But should it be so when the architect gives his skill and labor *gratis*?"

On Monday, March 27, I breakfasted with him at Mr. Strahan's. Mr. Strahan had taken a poor boy from the country as an apprentice, upon Johnson's recommendation. Johnson having enquired after him, said, "Mr. Strahan, let me have five guineas on account, and I'll give this boy one. Nay, if a man recommends a boy, and does nothing for him, it is sad work. Call him down."

I followed him into the court-yard, behind Mr. Strahan's house; and there I had a proof of what I had heard him profess, that he talked alike to all. "Some people tell you that they let themselves down to the capacity of their hearers. I never do that. I speak uniformly, in as intelligible a manner as I can."

“Well, my boy, how do you go on?” — “Pretty well, Sir; but they are afraid I an’t strong enough for some parts of the business.” Johnson. “Why, I shall be sorry for it, for when you consider with how little mental power and corporeal labor a printer can get a guinea a week, it is a very desirable occupation for you. Do you hear — take all the pains you can; and if this does not do, we must think of some other way of life for you. There’s a guinea.”

Here was one of the many, many instances of his active benevolence. At the same time, the slow and sonorous solemnity with which, while he bent himself down, he addressed a little thick short-legged boy, contrasted with the boy’s awkwardness and awe, could not but excite some ludicrous emotions.

I cannot too frequently request of my readers, while they peruse my account of Johnson’s conversation, to endeavor to keep in mind his deliberate and strong utterance. His mode of speaking was indeed very impressive; and I wish it could be preserved as music is written, according to the very ingenious method of Mr. Steele, who has shown how the recitation of Mr. Garrick, and other eminent speakers, might be transmitted to posterity *in score*.

On Friday, March 31, I supped with him and some friends at a tavern. One of the company attempted, with too much forwardness, to rally him on his late appearance at the theatre; but had reason to repent of his temerity. “Why, Sir, did you go to Mrs. Abington’s benefit? Did you see?” Johnson. “No, Sir.” “Did you hear?” Johnson. “No, Sir.” “Why then, Sir, did you go?” Johnson. “Because, Sir, she is a favorite of the public; and when the public cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I will go to your benefit too.”

Next morning I won a small bet from Lady Diana Beauclerk, by asking him as to one of his particularities, which her Ladyship laid I durst not do. It seems he had been frequently observed at the club to put into his pocket the Seville oranges, after he had squeezed the juice of them into the drink which he made for himself. Beauclerk and Garrick talked of it to me, and seemed to think that he had a strange un-

willingness to be discovered. We could not divine what he did with them; and this was the bold question to be put. I saw on his table the spoils of the preceding night, some fresh peels nicely scraped and cut into pieces. "O, Sir, (said I,) I now partly see what you do with the squeezed oranges which you put into your pocket at the Club." Johnson. "I have a great love for them." Boswell. "And pray, Sir, what do you do with them? You scrape them it seems, very neatly, and what next?" Johnson. "Let them dry, Sir." Boswell. "And what next?" Johnson. "Nay, Sir, you shall know their fate no further." Boswell. "Then the world must be left in the dark. It must be said (assuming a mock solemnity,) he scraped them and let them dry, but what he did with them next, he never could be prevailed upon to tell." Johnson. "Nay, Sir, you should say it more emphatically: — he could not be prevailed upon, even by his dearest friends, to tell."

I talked of the cheerfulness of Fleet-street, owing to the constant quick succession of people which we perceive passing through it. Johnson. "Why, Sir, Fleet-street has a very animated appearance; but I think the full tide of human existence is at Charing Cross."

Friday, April 7, I dined with him at a Tavern, with a numerous company. Patriotism having become one of our topics, Johnson suddenly uttered, in a strong determined tone, an apophthegm, at which many will start: "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." But let it be considered, that he did not mean a real and generous love of our country, but that pretended patriotism which so many, in all ages and countries, have made a cloak for self-interest. I maintained, that certainly all patriots were not scoundrels. Being urged, (not by Johnson) to name one exception, I mentioned an eminent person, whom we all greatly admired. Johnson. "Sir, I do not say that he is *not* honest; but we have no reason to conclude from his political conduct that he *is* honest. Were he to accept a place from this ministry he would lose that character of firmness which he has, and might be turned out of his place in a year."

On Tuesday, April 18, he and I were engaged to go with Sir Joshua Reynolds to dine with Mr. Cambridge, at his beautiful villa on the banks of the Thames, near Twickenham. Dr. Johnson's tardiness was such, that Sir Joshua, who had an appointment at Richmond, early in the day, was obliged to go by himself on horseback, leaving his coach to Johnson and me. Johnson was in such good spirits, that everything seemed to please him as we drove along.

As a curious instance how little a man knows, or wishes to know his own character in the world, or, rather as a convincing proof that Johnson's roughness was only external, and did not proceed from his heart, I insert the following dialogue. Johnson. "It is wonderful, Sir, how rare a quality good humor is in life. We meet with very few good-humored men." I mentioned four of our friends, none of whom he would allow to be good-humored. One was *acid*, another was *muddy*, and to the others he had objections which have escaped me. Then, shaking his head and stretching himself at ease in the coach, and smiling with much complacency, he turned to me and said, "I look upon *myself* as a good-humored fellow." The epithet *fellow*, applied to the great Lexicographer, the stately Moralist, the Masterly Critic, as if he had been *Sam Johnson*, a mere pleasant companion, was highly diverting; and this light notion of himself struck me with wonder. I answered, also smiling, "No, no, Sir; that will *not* do. You are good-natured, but not good-humored: you are irascible. You have not patience with folly and absurdity. I believe you would pardon them, if there were time to deprecate your vengeance; but punishment follows so quick after sentence, that they cannot escape."

Johnson praised *The Spectator*, particularly the character of Sir Roger de Coverley. He said, "Sir Roger did not die a violent death, as has been generally fancied. He was not killed; he died only because others were to die, and because his death afforded an opportunity to Addison for some very fine writing. We have the example of Cervantes making Don Quixote die. I never could see why Sir Roger is represented as a little cracked. It appears to me that the story of

the widow was intended to have something superinduced upon it; but the superstructure did not come."

I passed many hours with him on the 17th, of which I find all my memorial is, "much laughing." It should seem he had that day been in a humor for jocularly and merri-ment, and upon such occasions I never knew a man laugh more heartily. We may suppose, that the high relish of a state so different from his habitual gloom produced more than ordinary exertions of that distinguishing faculty of man, which has puzzled philosophers so much to explain. Johnson's laugh was as remarkable as any circumstance in his manner. It was a kind of good-humored growl. Tom Davies described it drolly enough: "He laughs like a rhinoceros."

"To Bennet Langton, Esq.

"Dear Sir,

"I have an old amanuensis in great distress. I have given what I think I can give, and begged till I cannot tell where to beg again. I put into his hand this morning four guineas. If you could collect three guineas more, it would clear him from his present difficulty. I am, Sir,

"Your most humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"May 21, 1775."

"To James Boswell, Esq.

"Dear Sir,

"I make no doubt but you are now safely lodged in your own habitation, and have told all your adventures to Mrs. Boswell and Miss Veronica. Pray teach Veronica to love me. Bid her not mind mamma.

"Mrs. Thrale has taken cold, and been very much disordered, but I hope is grown well. Mr. Langton went yesterday to Lincolnshire, and has invited Nicolaida to follow him. Beauclerk talks of going to Bath. I am to set out on Monday; so there is nothing but dispersion.

"I have returned Lord Hailes's entertaining sheets, but

must stay till I come back for more, because it will be inconvenient to send them after me in my vagrant state.

"I promised Mrs. Macaulay that I would try to serve her son at Oxford. I have not forgotten it, nor am unwilling to perform it. If they desire to give him an English education, it should be considered whether they cannot send him for a year or two to an English school. If he comes immediately from Scotland, he can make no figure in our Universities. The schools in the north, I believe, are cheap; and when I was a young man, were eminently good.

"There are two little books published by the Foulis, *Tele-machus* and Collins's *Poems*, each a shilling; I would be glad to have them.

"Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, though she does not love me. You see what perverse things ladies are, and how little to be trusted with feudal estates. When she mends and loves me, there may be more hope of her daughters.

"I will not send compliments to my friends by name, because I would be loath to leave any out in the enumeration. Tell them, as you see them, how well I speak of Scotch politeness, and Scotch hospitality, and Scotch beauty, and of every thing Scotch, but Scotch oat-cakes, and Scotch prejudices.

"Let me know the answer of Rasay, and the decision relating to Sir Allan. I am, my dearest Sir, with great affection,

"Your most obliged and

"Most humble servant,

"May 27, 1775."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"To James Boswell, Esq.

"My dear Sir,

"I now write to you, lest in some of your freaks and humors you should fancy yourself neglected. Such fancies I must entreat you never to admit, at least never to indulge; for my regard for you is so radicated and fixed, that it is become part of my mind and cannot be effaced but by some cause uncommonly violent; therefore, whether I write or not,

set your thoughts at rest. I now write to tell you that I shall not very soon write again, for I am to set out to-morrow on another journey.

"Your friends are all well at Streatham, and in Leicester-fields. Make my compliments to Mrs. Boswell, if she is in good humor with me.

"I am, Sir, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"September 14, 1775."

What he mentions in such light terms as, "I am to set out to-morrow on another journey," I soon afterwards discovered was no less than a tour to France with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. This was the only time in his life that he went upon the Continent.

When I met him in London the following year, the account which he gave me of his French tour, was, "Sir, I have seen all the visibilities of Paris, and around it; but to have formed an acquaintance with the people there would have required more time than I could stay."

He observed, "The great in France live very magnificently, but the rest very miserably. There is no happy middle state as in England. The shops of Paris are mean; the meat in the markets is such as would be sent to a gaol in England; and Mr. Thrale justly observed, that the cookery of the French was forced upon them by necessity; for they could not eat their meat, unless they added some taste to it. The French are an indelicate people; they will spit upon any place. At Madam ——'s, a literary lady of rank, the footman took the sugar in his fingers, and threw it into my coffee. I was going to put it aside; but hearing it was made on purpose for me, I e'en tasted Tom's fingers. The same lady would needs make tea *a l'Anglaise*. The spout of the tea-pot did not pour freely; she bade the footman blow into it. France is worse than Scotland in everything but climate. Nature has done more for the French; but they have done less for themselves than the Scotch have done."

Here let me not forget a curious anecdote, as related to me

by Mr. Beauclerk, which I shall endeavor to exhibit as well as I can in that gentleman's lively manner; and in justice to him it is proper to add, that Dr. Johnson told me I might rely both on the correctness of his memory and the fidelity of his narrative. "When Madame de Boufflers was first in England, (said Beauclerk,) she was desirous to see Johnson. I accordingly went with her to his chambers in the Temple, where she was entertained with his conversation for some time. When our visit was over, she and I left him, and were got into Inner Temple-lane, when all at once I heard a noise like thunder. This was occasioned by Johnson, who it seems, upon a little recollection, had taken it into his head that he ought to have done the honors of his literary residence to a foreign lady of quality, and eager to show himself a man of gallantry, was hurrying down the stair-case in violent agitation. He overtook us before we reached the Temple gate, and brushing in between me and Madame de Boufflers, seized her hand, and conducted her to her coach. His dress was a rusty brown morning-suit, a pair of old shoes by way of slippers, a little shrivelled wig sticking on the top of his head, and the sleeves of his shirt and the knees of his breeches hanging loose. A considerable crowd of people gathered round, and were not a little struck by this singular appearance."

CHAPTER X (1776)

JOHNSON ON TOUR AND IN LONDON: HIS MEETING WITH WILKES

Johnson's Removal — Johnson on Life at Sea — On Extraordinary Characters — On the Felicities of Taverns — At Birmingham — Boswell on the Use of Oats — The Wide Circle of Johnson's Acquaintances — Johnson on Thomson — On the Use of Wine — On his *Rambler* Papers — On Reading — Boswell Endeavors to Bring Johnson and John Wilkes Together — Sudden Obstacles — The Meeting of the Great Conservative and the Great Radical — Mr. Wilkes is Polite at Dinner — Johnson Unbends and Talks — On Foote — On Garrick — On Writing Biographies — On Cibber — On the Scotch — Dr. Johnson's Civility and Courtesy.

HAVING arrived in London late on Friday, the 15th of March, I hastened next morning to wait on Dr. Johnson, at his house; but found he was removed from Johnson's-court, No. 7, to Bolt-court, No. 8, still keeping to his favorite Fleet-street. My reflection at the time upon this change as marked in my journal is as follows: "I felt a foolish regret that he had left a court which bore his name; but it was not foolish to be affected with some tenderness of regard for a place in which I had seen him a great deal, from whence I had often issued a better and a happier man than when I went in, and which had often appeared to my imagination while I trod its pavements, in the solemn darkness of the night, to be sacred to wisdom and piety." Being informed that he was at Mr. Thrale's in the Borough, I hastened thither, and found Mrs. Thrale and him at breakfast. I was kindly welcomed. In a moment he was in a full glow of conversation, and I felt myself elevated as if brought into another state of being. Mrs. Thrale and I looked to each other while he talked, and our looks expressed our congenial admiration and affection for him. I shall ever recollect this scene with great pleasure. I exclaimed to her, "I am now intellectually, *Hermippus redivivus*, I am quite restored by

him, by transfusion of *mind*." "There are many (she replied,) who admire and respect Mr. Johnson; but you and I love him."

He seemed very happy in the near prospect of going to Italy with Mr. and Mrs. Thrale. "But, (said he,) before leaving England I am to take a jaunt to Oxford, Birmingham, my native city Lichfield, and my old friend, Dr. Taylor's, at Ashbourne, in Derbyshire. I shall go in a few days, and you, Boswell, shall go with me." I was ready to accompany him; being willing even to leave London to have the pleasure of his conversation.

I again visited him on Monday. He took occasion to enlarge, as he often did, upon the wretchedness of a sea life. "A ship is worse than a gaol. There is, in a gaol, better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind; and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger. When men come to like a sea life, they are not fit to live on land." — "Then (said I,) it would be cruel in a father to breed his son to the sea." Johnson. "It would be cruel in a father who thinks as I do. Men go to sea, before they know the unhappiness of that way of life; and when they have come to know it, they cannot escape from it, because it is then too late to choose another profession; as indeed is generally the case with men when they have once engaged in any particular way of life."

On Tuesday, March 19, which was fixed for our proposed jaunt, we met in the morning at the Somerset coffee-house in the Strand, where we were taken up by the Oxford coach. I expressed a desire to be acquainted with a lady who had been much talked of, and universally celebrated for extraordinary address and insinuation. Johnson. "Never believe extraordinary characters which you hear of people. Depend upon it, Sir, they are exaggerated. You do not see one man shoot a great deal higher than another." I mentioned Mr. Burke. Johnson. "Yes; Burke is an extraordinary man. His stream of mind is perpetual." It is very pleasing to me to record, that Johnson's high estimation of the talents of this gentleman was uniform from their early acquaintance.

Sir Joshua Reynolds informs me, that when Mr. Burke was first elected a member of Parliament, and Sir John Hawkins expressed a wonder at his attaining a seat, Johnson said, "Now we who know Mr. Burke, know, that he will be one of the first men in the country." And once, when Johnson was ill, and unable to exert himself as much as usual without fatigue, Mr. Burke having been mentioned, he said, "That fellow calls forth all my powers. Were I to see Burke now it would kill me." So much was he accustomed to consider conversation as a contest, and such was his notion of Burke as an opponent.

We dined at an excellent inn at Chapel House, where he expatiated on the felicity of England in its taverns and inns, and triumphed over the French for not having, in any perfection, the tavern life. "There is no private house, (said he,) in which people can enjoy themselves so well, as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that everybody should be easy; in the nature of things it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him; and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man's house, as if it were his own. Whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome: and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servants will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do, who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, Sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn." He then repeated, with great emotion, Shenstone's lines:

"Whoe'er has travell'd life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn."

I wished to have stayed at Birmingham to-night, to have talked more with Mr. Hector; but my friend was impatient to reach his native city; so we drove on that stage in the dark, and were long pensive and silent. When we came within the focus of the Lichfield lamps, "Now (said he,) we are getting out of a state of death." We put up at the Three Crowns, not one of the great inns, but a good old-fashioned one, which was kept by Mr. Wilkins, and was the very next house to that in which Johnson was born and brought up, and which was still his own property. We had a comfortable supper, and got into high spirits. I felt all my Toryism glow in this old capital of Staffordshire. I could have offered incense *genio loci*,¹ and I indulged in libations of that ale which, Boniface, in *The Beaux' Stratagem*, recommends with such an eloquent jollity.

I saw here, for the first time, *oat ale*; and oat cakes, not hard as in Scotland, but soft like a Yorkshire cake, were served at breakfast. It was pleasant to me to find, that "Oats," the "*food of horses*," were so much used as the "*food of the people*" in Dr. Johnson's own town. He expatiated in praise of Lichfield and its inhabitants, who, he said, were "the most sober, decent people in England, the genteeldest in proportion to their wealth, and spoke the purest English." I doubted as to the last article of this eulogy; for they had several provincial sounds; as *there*, pronounced like *fear*, instead of like *fair*; *once*, pronounced *woonse*, instead of *wunse*, or *wonse*. Johnson himself never got entirely free of those provincial accents. Garrick sometimes used to take him off, squeezing a lemon into a punch-bowl, with uncouth gesticulation, looking round the company, and calling out, "Who's for *poonsh*?"

Having lain at St. Alban's, on Thursday, March 28, we breakfasted the next morning at Barnet. I enjoyed the luxury of our approach to London, that metropolis which we both loved so much, for the high and varied intellectual pleasure which it furnishes. We stopped at Messieurs Dilly, booksellers in the Poultry; from whence he hurried away in a hackney coach, to Mr. Thrale's in the Borough.

¹ To the genius of the place.

On Wednesday, April 3, in the morning I found him very busy putting his books in order, and as they were generally very old ones, clouds of dust were flying around him. He had on a pair of large gloves such as hedgers use. His present appearance put me in mind of my uncle, Dr. Boswell's description of him, "A robust genius, born to grapple with whole libraries."

When I expressed an earnest wish for his remarks on Italy, he said, "I do not see that I could make a book upon Italy; yet I should be glad to get two hundred pounds, or five hundred pounds, by such a work." This showed both that a journal of his Tour upon the Continent was not wholly out of his contemplation, and that he uniformly adhered to that strange opinion which his indolent disposition made him utter: "No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money." Numerous instances to refute this will occur to all who are versed in the history of literature.

It was a very remarkable circumstance about Johnson, whom shallow observers have supposed to have been ignorant of the world, that very few men had seen greater variety of characters; and none could observe them better, as was evident from the strong, yet nice portraits which he often drew. I have frequently thought that if he had made out what the French call *une catalogue raisonné*¹ of all the people who had passed under his observation, it would have afforded a very rich fund of instruction and entertainment. The suddenness with which his accounts of some of them started out in conversation was not less pleasing than surprising. I remember he once observed to me, "It is wonderful, Sir, what is to be found in London. The most literary conversation I ever enjoyed was at the table of Jack Ellis, a money-scrivener behind the Royal Exchange, with whom I at one period used to dine generally once a week."

Volumes would be required to contain a list of his numerous and various acquaintance, none of whom he ever forgot; and could describe and discriminate them all with precision and vivacity. He associated with persons the most widely differ-

¹ A systematic catalogue.

ent in manners, abilities, rank, and accomplishments. He was at once the companion of the brilliant Colonel Forrester of the Guards, who wrote *The Polite Philosopher*, and of the awkward and uncouth Robert Levett; of Lord Thurlow, and Mr. Sastres, the Italian master; and has dined one day with the beautiful, gay, and fascinating Lady Craven, and the next with good Mrs. Gardiner, the tallow-chandler, on Snowhill.

We spent the evening at Mr. Hoole's. Mr. Mickle, the excellent translator of *The Lusiad*, was there. I have preserved little of the conversation of this evening. Dr. Johnson said, "Thomson had a true poetical genius, the power of viewing everything in a poetical light. His fault is such a cloud of words sometimes, that the sense can hardly peep through. Shiels, who compiled *Cibber's Lives of the Poets*, was one day sitting with me. I took down Thomson, and read aloud a large portion of him, and then asked, — 'Is not this fine?' Shiels having expressed the highest admiration, 'Well, Sir, (said I,) I have omitted every other line.'"

Johnson and I supped this evening at the Crown and Anchor tavern, in company with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Langton, Mr. Nairne, now one of the Scotch Judges, with the title of Lord Dunsinan, and my very worthy friend, Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo.

We discussed the question, whether drinking improved conversation and benevolence. Sir Joshua maintained it did. Johnson. "No, Sir, before dinner men meet with great inequality of understanding; and those who are conscious of their inferiority have the modesty not to talk. When they have drunk wine, every man feels himself happy, and loses that modesty, and grows impudent and vociferous: but he is not improved: he is only not sensible of his defects." Sir Joshua said the Doctor was talking of the effects of excess in wine; but that a moderate glass enlivened the mind, by giving a proper circulation to the blood. "I am, (said he,) in very good spirits, when I get up in the morning. By dinner-time I am exhausted; wine puts me in the same state as when I got up: and I am sure that moderate drinking makes people talk better." Johnson. "No, Sir; wine gives

not light, gay, ideal hilarity; but tumultuous, noisy, clamorous merriment. I have heard none of those drunken, — nay, drunken is a coarse word, — none of those *vinous* flights.” Sir Joshua. “Because you have sat by, quite sober, and felt an envy of the happiness of those who were drinking.” Johnson. “Perhaps, contempt. — And, Sir, it is not necessary to be drunk one’s self, to relish the wit of drunkenness. Do we not judge of the drunken wit of the dialogue between Iago and Cassio, the most excellent in its kind, when we are quite sober? Wit is wit, by whatever means it is produced; and, if good, will appear so at all times. I admit that the spirits are raised by drinking, as by the common participation of any pleasure: cock-fighting, or bear-baiting, will raise the spirits of a company, as drinking does, though surely they will not improve conversation. I also admit, that there are some sluggish men who are improved by drinking; as there are fruits which are not good till they are rotten. There are such men, but they are medlars. I indeed allow that there have been a very few men of talents who were improved by drinking; but I maintain that I am right as to the effects of drinking in general: and let it be considered, that there is no position, however false in its universality, which is not true of some particular man.” Sir William Forbes said, “Might not a man warmed with wine be like a bottle of beer, which is made brisker by being set before the fire?” “Nay, (said Johnson, laughing,) I cannot answer that: that is too much for me.”

He told us, “almost all his *Ramblers* were written just as they were wanted for the press; that he sent a certain portion of the copy of an essay, and wrote the remainder, while the former part of it was printing. When it was wanted, and he had fairly sat down to it, he was sure it would be done.”

He said, that for general improvement, a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him to; though to be sure, if a man has a science to learn, he must regularly and resolutely advance. He added, “What we read with inclination makes a much stronger impression. If we read without inclination, half the mind is employed in

fixing the attention; so there is but one half to be employed on what we read." He told us, he read Fielding's *Amelia* through without stopping. He said, "If a man begins to read in the middle of a book, and feels an inclination to go on, let him not quit it, to go to the beginning. He may perhaps not feel again the inclination."

I am now to record a very curious incident in Dr. Johnson's life, which fell under my own observation; of which *pars magna fui*,¹ and which I am persuaded will, with the liberal-minded, be much to his credit.

My desire of being acquainted with celebrated men of every description had made me, much about the same time, obtain an introduction to Dr. Samuel Johnson and to John Wilkes, Esq. Two men more different could perhaps not be selected out of all mankind. They had even attacked one another with some asperity in their writings; yet I lived in habits of friendship with both. I could fully relish the excellence of each; for I have ever delighted in that intellectual chemistry which can separate good qualities from evil in the same person.

Sir John Pringle, "mine own friend and my Father's friend," between whom and Dr. Johnson I in vain wished to establish an acquaintance, as I respected and lived in intimacy with both of them, observed to me once, very ingeniously, "It is not in friendship as in mathematics, where two things, each equal to a third, are equal between themselves. You agree with Johnson as a middle quality, and you agree with me as a middle quality; but Johnson and I should not agree." Sir John was not sufficiently flexible; so I desisted; knowing, indeed, that the repulsion was equally strong on the part of Johnson; who, I know not from what cause, unless his being a Scotchman, had formed a very erroneous opinion of Sir John. But I conceived an irresistible wish, if possible, to bring Dr. Johnson and Mr. Wilkes together. How to manage it, was a nice and difficult matter.

My worthy booksellers and friends, Messieurs Dilly in the Poultry, at whose hospitable and well-covered table I have

¹ I played a great rôle, from Virgil's *Aeneid*, ii, 6.

seen a greater number of literary men than at any other except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, had invited me to meet Mr. Wilkes and some more gentlemen, on Wednesday, May 15. "Pray (said I,) let us have Dr. Johnson." — "What, with Mr. Wilkes? not for the world, (said Mr. Edward Dilly;) Dr. Johnson would never forgive me." — Come, (said I,) if you'll let me negotiate for you, I will be answerable that all shall go well." Dilly. "Nay, if you will take it upon you, I am sure I shall be very happy to see them both here."

Notwithstanding the high veneration which I entertained for Dr. Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I should gain my point. I was persuaded that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, "Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?" he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, "Dine with Jack Wilkes, Sir! I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch." I therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house in an evening, took occasion to open my plan thus: "Mr. Dilly, Sir, sends his respectful compliments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honor to dine with him on Wednesday next along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland." Johnson. "Sir, I am obliged to Mr. Dilly. I will wait upon him —" Boswell. "Provided, Sir, I suppose, that the company which he is to have, is agreeable to you." Johnson. "What do you mean, Sir? What do you take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world, as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?" Boswell. "I beg your pardon, Sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. Perhaps he may have some of what he calls his patriotic friends with him." Johnson. "Well, Sir, and what then? What care *I* for his *patriotic friends*? Poh!" Boswell. "I should not be surprised to find Jack Wilkes there." Johnson. "And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is that to *me*, Sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but really it is treating me strangely to

talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally." Boswell. "Pray, forgive me, Sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me." Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed.

Upon the much expected Wednesday, I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffeting his books, as upon a former occasion, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad. "How is this, Sir? (said I). Don't you recollect that you are to dine at Mr. Dilly's?" Johnson. "Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly's: it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams." Boswell. "But, my dear Sir, you know you were engaged to Mr. Dilly, and I told him so. He will expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come." Johnson. "You must talk to Mrs. Williams about this."

Here was a sad dilemma. I feared that what I was so confident I had secured would yet be frustrated. He had accustomed himself to show Mrs. Williams such a degree of humane attention, as frequently imposed some restraint upon him; and I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir. I hastened down stairs to the blind lady's room, and told her I was in great uneasiness, for Dr. Johnson had engaged to me to dine this day at Mr. Dilly's, but that he had told me he had forgotten his engagement, and had ordered dinner at home. "Yes, sir, (said she, pretty peevishly,) Dr. Johnson is to dine at home." — "Madam, (said I,) his respect for you is such, that I know he will not leave you, unless you absolutely desire it. But as you have so much of his company, I hope you will be good enough to forego it for a day: as Mr. Dilly is a very worthy man, has frequently had agreeable parties at his house for Dr. Johnson, and will be vexed if the Doctor neglects him to-day. And then, Madam, be pleased to consider my situation; I carried the message, and I assured Mr. Dilly that Dr. Johnson was to come; and no doubt he has made a dinner, and in-

vited a company, and boasted of the honor he expected to have. I shall be quite disgraced if the Doctor is not there." She gradually softened to my solicitations, which were certainly as earnest as most entreaties to ladies upon any occasion, and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr. Johnson, "That all things considered, she thought he should certainly go." I flew back to him, still in dust, and careless of what should be the event, "indifferent in his choice to go or stay;" but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs. Williams's consent, he roared, "Frank, a clean shirt," and was very soon dressed. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him to set out for Gretna-Green.

When we entered Mr. Dilly's drawing-room, he found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. I observed him whispering to Mr. Dilly, "Who is that gentleman, Sir?" — "Mr. Arthur Lee." — Johnson. "Too, too, too" (under his breath), which was one of his habitual mutterings. Mr. Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a *patriot*, but an *American*. He was afterwards minister from the United States at the court of Madrid. "And who is the gentleman in lace?" — "Mr. Wilkes, Sir." This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself, and taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat and read, or at least kept his eye upon it intently for some time, till he composed himself. His feelings, I dare say, were awkward enough. But he no doubt recollected his having rated me for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company, and he, therefore, resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of those whom he might chance to meet.

The cheering sound of "Dinner is upon the table," dissolved his reverie, and we *all* sat down without any symptom of ill humor. There were present, beside Mr. Wilkes, and

Mr. Arthur Lee, who was an old companion of mine when he studied physic at Edinburgh, Mr. (now Sir John) Miller, Dr. Lettsom, and Mr. Slater, the druggist. Mr. Wilkes placed himself next to Dr. Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness, that he gained upon him insensibly. No man eat more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Mr. Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. "Pray give me leave, Sir: It is better here — A little of the brown — Some fat, Sir — A little of the stuffing — Some gravy — Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter — Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; — or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest." — "Sir, Sir, I am obliged to you, Sir," cried Johnson, bowing, and turning his head to him with a look for some time of "surly virtue," but, in a short while, of complacency.

Foote being mentioned, Johnson said, "He is not a good mimic." One of the company added, "A merry Andrew, a buffoon." Johnson. "But he has wit too, and is not deficient in ideas, or in fertility and variety of imagery, and not empty of reading; he has knowledge enough to fill up his part. One species of wit he has in an eminent degree, that of escape. You drive him into a corner with both hands; but he's gone, Sir, when you think you have got him — like an animal that jumps over your head. Then he has a great range for wit; he never lets truth stand between him and a jest, and he is sometimes mighty coarse. Garrick is under many restraints from which Foote is free." Wilkes. "Garrick's wit is more like Lord Chesterfield's." Johnson. "The first time I was in company with Foote was at Fitzherbert's. Having no good opinion of the fellow, I was resolved not to be pleased; and it is very difficult to please a man against his will. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him. But the dog was so very comical, that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back upon my chair, and fairly laugh it out. No, Sir, he was irresistible. He upon one occasion experienced, in an extraordinary degree, the efficacy of his

powers of entertaining. Amongst the many and various modes which he tried of getting money, he became a partner with a small-beer brewer, and he was to have a share of the profits for procuring customers amongst his numerous acquaintance. Fitzherbert was one who took his small-beer; but it was so bad that the servants resolved not to drink it. They were at some loss how to notify their resolution, being afraid of offending their master, who they knew liked Foote much as a companion. At last they fixed upon a little black boy, who was rather a favorite, to be their deputy, and deliver their remonstrance; and having invested him with the whole authority of the kitchen, he was to inform Mr. Fitzherbert, in all their names, upon a certain day, that they would drink Foote's small-beer no longer. On that day Foote happened to dine at Fitzherbert's, and this boy served at table; he was so delighted with Foote's stories, and merriment, and grimace, that when he went down stairs, he told them, "This is the finest man I have ever seen. I will not deliver your message. I will drink his small-beer."

Somebody observed that Garrick could not have done this. Wilkes. "Garrick would have made the small-beer still smaller. He is now leaving the stage; but he will play *Scrub* all his life." I knew that Johnson would let nobody attack Garrick but himself, as Garrick said to me, and I had heard him praise his liberality; so to bring out his commendation of his celebrated pupil, I said loudly, "I have heard Garrick is liberal." Johnson. "Yes, Sir, I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man in England that I am acquainted with, and that not from ostentatious views. Garrick was very poor when he began life; so when he came to have money, he probably was very unskilful in giving away, and saved when he should not. But Garrick began to be liberal as soon as he could; and I am of opinion, the reputation of avarice which he has had has been very lucky for him, and prevented his having many enemies. You despise a man for avarice, but do not hate him. Garrick might have been much better attacked for living with more splendor than is suitable to a player: if they had

had the wit to have assaulted him in that quarter, they might have galled him more. But they have kept clamoring about his avarice, which has rescued him from much obloquy and envy."

Talking of the great difficulty of obtaining authentic information for biography, Johnson told us, "When I was a young fellow I wanted to write the *Life of Dryden*, and in order to get materials, I applied to the only two persons then alive who had seen him; these were old Swinney, and old Cibber. Swinney's information was no more than this, 'That at Will's coffee-house Dryden had a particular chair for himself, which was set by the fire in winter, and was then called his winter-chair; and that it was carried out for him to the balcony in summer, and was then called his summer-chair.' Cibber could tell no more but 'That he remembered him a decent old man, arbiter of critical disputes at Will's.' You are to consider that Cibber was then at a great distance from Dryden, had perhaps one leg only in the room, and durst not draw in the other." Boswell. "Yet Cibber was a man of observation?" Johnson. "I think not." Boswell. "You will allow his *Apology* to be well done." Johnson. "Very well done, to be sure, Sir. That book is a striking proof of the justice of Pope's remark:

"Each might his several province well command,
Would all but stoop to what they understand."

Boswell. "And his plays are good." Johnson. "Yes; but that was his trade; *l'esprit de corps*;¹ he had been all his life among players and play-writers. I wondered that he had so little to say in conversation, for he had kept the best company, and learnt all that can be got by the ear. He abused Pindar to me, and then showed me an ode of his own, with an absurd couplet, making a linnet soar on an eagle's wing. I told him that when the ancients made a simile, they always made it like something real."

Wilkes. "We have no City-Poet now: that is an office which has gone into disuse. The last was Elkanah Settle.

¹ The common devotion of members to an organization.

There is something in *names* which one cannot help feeling. Now *Elkanah Settle* sounds so *queer*, who can expect much from that name? We should have no hesitation to give it for John Dryden, in preference to Elkanah Settle, from the names only, without knowing their different merits."

Mr. Arthur Lee mentioned some Scotch who had taken possession of a barren part of America, and wondered why they should choose it. Johnson. "Why, Sir, all barrenness is comparative. The *Scotch* would not know it to be barren." Boswell. "Come, come, he is flattering the English. You have now been in Scotland, Sir, and say if you did not see meat and drink enough there." Johnson. "Why yes, Sir; meat and drink enough to give the inhabitants sufficient strength to run away from home." All these quick and lively sallies were said sportively, quite in jest, and with a smile, which showed that he meant only wit. Upon this topic he and Mr. Wilkes could perfectly assimilate; here was a bond of union between them, and I was conscious that as both of them had visited Caledonia, both were fully satisfied of the strange narrow ignorance of those who imagine that it is a land of famine. But they amused themselves with persevering in the old jokes.

This record, though by no means so perfect as I could wish, will serve to give a notion of a very curious interview, which was not only pleasing at the time, but had the agreeable and benignant effect of reconciling any animosity and sweetening any acidity, which, in the various bustle of political contest, had been produced in the minds of two men, who, though widely different, had so many things in common — classical learning, modern literature, wit and humor, and ready repartee — that it would have been much to be regretted if they had been for ever at a distance from each other.

Mr. Burke gave me much credit for this successful *negotiation*; and pleasantly said, "that there was nothing equal to it in the whole history of the *Corps Diplomatique*."

I attended Dr. Johnson home, and had the satisfaction to hear him tell Mrs. Williams how much he had been pleased

with Mr. Wilkes's company, and what an agreeable day he had passed.

On the evening of the next day I took leave of him, being to set out for Scotland. I thanked him with great warmth for all his kindness. "Sir, (said he,) you are very welcome. Nobody repays it with *more*."

How very false is the notion that has gone round the world of the rough, and passionate, and harsh manners of this great and good man. That he had occasional sallies of heat of temper, and that he was sometimes, perhaps, "too easily provoked" by absurdity and folly, and sometimes too desirous of triumph in colloquial contest, must be allowed. The quickness both of his perception and sensibility disposed him to sudden explosions of satire, to which his extraordinary readiness of wit was a strong and almost irresistible incitement. To adopt one of the finest images in Mr. Home's *Douglas*,

" . . . On each glance of thought
Decision followed, as the thunderbolt
Pursues the flash!" . . .

I admit that the beadle within him was often so eager to apply the lash, that the Judge had not time to consider the case with sufficient deliberation.

That he was occasionally remarkable for violence of temper may be granted: but let us ascertain the degree, and not let it be supposed that he was in a perpetual rage, and never without a club in his hand to knock down everyone who approached him. On the contrary, the truth is that by much the greatest part of his time he was civil, obliging, nay, polite in the true sense of the word; so much so, that many gentlemen who were long acquainted with him never received, or even heard a strong expression from him.

CHAPTER XI (1777)

THE TRIP TO ASHBOURNE

Letters to Boswell — The Inception of *The Lives of the English Poets* — The Addition of Watts — Johnson and Mrs. Boswell — Boswell Meets Johnson at Ashbourne — On the Archaic Style in Poetry — Johnson's Burlesque Ballad — On Cibber — On Keeping a Bad Table — On Certain English Phrases — Boswell and Johnson Exchange Sentiments of Regard.

“*To Dr. Samuel Johnson.*

“GLASGOW, April 24, 1777.

“*My dear Sir,*

“Our worthy friend Thrale's death having appeared in the newspapers, and been afterwards contradicted, I have been placed in a state of very uneasy uncertainty, from which I hoped to be relieved by you: but my hopes have as yet been vain. How could you omit to write to me on such an occasion? I shall wait with anxiety.

“I am going to Auchinleck to stay a fortnight with my father. It is better not to be there very long at one time. But frequent renewals of attention are agreeable to him.

“Pray tell me about this edition of *The English Poets*, with a Preface, biographical and critical, to each Author, by Samuel Johnson, LL.D. which I see advertised. I am delighted with the prospect of it. Indeed I am happy to feel that I am capable of being so much delighted with literature. But is not the charm of this publication chiefly owing to the *magnum nomen*¹ in the front of it?

“What do you say of Lord Chesterfield's *Memoirs* and last *Letters*?

“My wife has made marmalade of oranges for you. I left her and my daughters and Alexander all well yesterday. I

¹ The great name.

have taught Veronica to speak of you thus: — Dr. Johnson, not Johnston. I remain, my dear Sir,

“Your most affectionate,
“And obliged humble servant,
“JAMES BOSWELL.”

“*To James Boswell, Esq.*

“*Dear Sir,*

“The story of Mr. Thrale’s death, as he had neither been sick nor in any other danger, made so little impression upon me, that I never thought about obviating its effects on anybody else. It is supposed to have been produced by the English custom of making April fools, that is, of sending one another on some foolish errand on the first of April.

“Tell Mrs. Boswell that I shall taste her marmalade cautiously at first. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*.¹ Beware, says the Italian proverb, of a reconciled enemy. But when I find it does me no harm, I shall then receive it and be thankful for it, as a pledge of firm and, I hope, of unalterable kindness. She is, after all, a dear, dear lady.

“Please to return Dr. Blair thanks for his sermons. The Scotch write English wonderfully well. . . .

“Your frequent visits to Auchinleck, and your short stay there, are very laudable and very judicious. Your present concord with your father gives me great pleasure; it was all that you seemed to want.

“My health is very bad, and my nights are very unquiet. What can I do to mend them? I have for this summer nothing better in prospect than a journey into Staffordshire and Derbyshire, perhaps with Oxford and Birmingham in my way.

“Make my compliments to Miss Veronica; I must leave it to *her* philosophy to comfort you for the loss of little David. You must remember, that to keep three out of four is more than your share. Mrs. Thrale has but four out of eleven.

¹ “I fear the Greeks, even though they come bearing gifts,” remarked a suspicious Trojan in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, ii, 49.

"I am engaged to write little Lives, and little Prefaces, to a little edition of *The English Poets*. I think I have persuaded the booksellers to insert something of Thomson; and if you could give me some information about him, for the Life which we have is very scanty, I should be glad. I am, dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate humble servant,
"SAM. JOHNSON."

"May 3, 1777."

To those who delight in tracing the progress of works of literature, it will be an entertainment to compare the limited design with the ample execution of that admirable performance, *The Lives of the English Poets*, which is the richest, most beautiful, and indeed most perfect, production of Johnson's pen. His notion of it at this time appears in the preceding letter. He has a memorandum in this year, "29 May, Easter Eve, I treated with booksellers on a bargain, but the time was not long." The bargain was concerning that undertaking; but his tender conscience seems alarmed, lest it should have intruded too much on his devout preparation for the solemnity of the ensuing day. But, indeed, very little time was necessary for Johnson's concluding a treaty with the booksellers; as he had, I believe, less attention to profit from his labors, than any man to whom literature has been a profession. I shall here insert from a letter to me from my late worthy friend Mr. Edward Dilly, though of a later date, an account of this plan so happily conceived; since it was the occasion of procuring for us an elegant collection of the best biography and criticism of which our language can boast.

"To James Boswell, Esq.

"SOUTHILL, Sept. 26, 1777.

"Dear Sir,

"You will find by this letter, that I am still in the same calm retreat, from the noise and bustle of London, as when I wrote to you last. I am happy to find you had such an agreeable meeting with your old friend Dr. Johnson; I have no

doubt your stock is much increased by the interview; few men, nay I may say, scarcely any man has got that fund of knowledge and entertainment as Dr. Johnson in conversation. When he opens freely, every one is attentive to what he says, and cannot fail of improvement as well as pleasure.

“The edition of *The Poets*, now printing, will do honor to the English press; and a concise account of the life of each author, by Dr. Johnson, will be a very valuable addition, and stamp the reputation of this edition superior to anything that is gone before. The first cause that gave rise to this undertaking, I believe, was owing to the little trifling edition of *The Poets*, printing by the Martins at Edinburgh, and to be sold by Bell, in London. Upon examining the volumes which were printed, the type was found so extremely small, that many persons could not read them; not only this inconvenience attended it, but the inaccuracy of the press was very conspicuous. These reasons, as well as the idea of an invasion of what we call our Literary Property, induced the London booksellers to print an elegant and accurate edition of all the English poets of reputation, from Chaucer to the present time.

“Accordingly a select number of the most respectable booksellers met on the occasion; and on consulting together, agreed, that all the proprietors of copyright in the various Poets should be summoned together; and when their opinions were given, to proceed immediately on the business. Accordingly a meeting was held, consisting of about forty of the most respectable booksellers of London, when it was agreed that an elegant and uniform edition of *The English Poets* should be immediately printed, with a concise account of the life of each author, by Dr. Samuel Johnson; and that three persons should be deputed to wait upon Dr. Johnson, to solicit him to undertake the Lives, viz., T. Davies, Strahan, and Cadell. The Doctor very politely undertook it, and seemed exceedingly pleased with the proposal. As to the terms, it was left entirely to the Doctor to name his own; he mentioned two hundred guineas; it was immediately agreed to; and a farther compliment, I believe, will be made him.

A committee was likewise appointed to engage the best engravers, *viz.*, Bartolozzi, Sherwin, Hall, &c. Likewise another committee for giving directions about the paper, printing, &c. so that the whole will be conducted with spirit, and in the best manner, with respect to authorship, editorship, engravings, &c. &c. My brother will give you a list of the Poets we mean to give, many of which are within the time of the Act of Queen Anne, which Martin and Bell cannot give, as they have no property in them; the proprietors are almost all the booksellers in London, of consequence. I am, dear Sir,

“Ever yours,

“EDWARD DILLY.”

“*Dr. Johnson to Mr. Edward Dilly.*

“*Sir,*

“To the collection of *English Poets* I have recommended the volume of Dr. Watts to be added; his name has long been held by me in veneration, and I would not willingly be reduced to tell of him only that he was born and died. Yet of his life I know very little, and therefore must pass him in a manner very unworthy of his character, unless some of his friends will favor me with the necessary information; many of them must be known to you; and by your influence perhaps I may obtain some instruction. My plan does not exact much; but I wish to distinguish Watts, a man who never wrote but for a good purpose. Be pleased to do for me what you can. I am, Sir,

“Your humble servant,

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

“Bolt-court, Fleet-street,

“*July 7, 1777.*”

“*Dr. Johnson to Mrs. Boswell.*

“*Madam,*

“Though I am well enough pleased with the taste of sweetmeats, very little of the pleasure which I received at the arrival of your jar of marmalade arose from eating it. I

received it as a token of friendship, as a proof of reconciliation, things much sweeter than sweetmeats, and upon this consideration I return you, dear Madam, my sincerest thanks. By having your kindness I think I have a double security for the continuance of Mr. Boswell's, which it is not to be expected that any man can long keep, when the influence of a lady highly and so justly valued operates against him. Mr. Boswell will tell you that I was always faithful to your interest, and always endeavored to exalt you in his estimation. You must now do the same for me. We must all help one another and you must now consider me as, dear Madam,

“Your most obliged

“And most humble servant,

“July 22, 1777.”

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

On Sunday evening, Sept. 14, I arrived at Ashbourne, and drove directly up to Dr. Taylor's door. Dr. Johnson and he appeared before I had got out of the post-chaise, and welcomed me cordially.

I was somewhat disappointed in finding that the edition of *The English Poets*, for which he was to write Prefaces and Lives, was not an undertaking directed by him: but that he was to furnish a Preface and Life to any poet the booksellers pleased. I asked him if he would do this to any dunce's works, if they should ask him. Johnson. “Yes, Sir, and *say* he was a dunce.” My friend seemed now not much to relish talking of this edition.

We had with us at dinner several of Dr. Taylor's neighbours, good civil gentlemen, who seemed to understand Dr. Johnson very well, and not to consider him in the light that a certain person did, who being struck, or rather stunned by his voice and manner, when he was afterwards asked what he thought of him, answered, “He's a tremendous companion.”

He observed, that a gentleman of eminence in literature had got into a bad style of poetry of late. “He puts (said he) a very common thing in a strange dress till he does not know it himself, and thinks other people do not know it.” Boswell. “That is owing to his being so much versant in old

English poetry." Johnson. "What is that to the purpose, Sir? If I say a man is drunk, and you tell me it is owing to his taking much drink, the matter is not mended. No, Sir, — has taken to an odd mode. For example; he'd write thus:

‘Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,
Wearing out life’s evening gray.’

Gray evening is common enough; but *evening gray* he'd think fine. — Stay; — we'll make out the stanza:

‘Hermit hoar, in solemn cell,
Wearing out life’s evening gray:
Smite thy bosom, sage, and tell
What is bliss? and which the way?’”

Boswell. "But why smite his bosom, Sir?" Johnson. "Why to show he was in earnest," (smiling). — He at an after period added the following stanza:

“Thus I spoke; and speaking sigh’d;
— Scarce repress’d the starting tear; —
When the smiling sage replied —
— Come, my lad, and drink some beer.”

I cannot help thinking the first stanza very good solemn poetry, as also the first three lines of the second. Its last line is an excellent burlesque surprise on gloomy sentimental enquirers.

I suggested a doubt, that if I were to reside in London, the exquisite zest with which I relished it in occasional visits might go off, and I might grow tired of it. Johnson. "Why, Sir, you find no man, at all intellectual, who is willing to leave London. No, Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford."

I shall present my readers with a series of what I gathered this evening from the Johnsonian garden.

"Garrick's gaiety of conversation had delicacy and elegance; Foote makes you laugh more; but Foote has the air of a buffoon paid for entertaining the company. He, indeed, well deserves his hire."

"Colley Cibber once consulted me as to one of his birthday Odes, a long time before it was wanted. I objected very

freely to several passages. Cibber lost patience, and would not read his Ode to an end. When we had done with criticism, we walked over to Richardson's, the author of *Clarissa*, and I wondered to find Richardson displeased that I 'did not treat Cibber with more *respect*.' Now, Sir, to talk of *respect* for a *player*!" (smiling disdainfully.) Boswell. "There, Sir, you are always heretical: you never will allow merit to a player." Johnson. "Merit, Sir, what merit? Do you respect a rope-dancer, or a ballad-singer?" Boswell. "No, Sir: but we respect a great player, as a man who can conceive lofty sentiments, and can express them gracefully." Johnson. "What, Sir, a fellow who claps a hump on his back, and a lump on his leg, and cries, '*I am Richard the Third*'? Nay, sir, a ballad-singer is a higher man, for he does two things; he repeats and he sings: there is both recitation and music in his performance: the player only recites." Boswell. "My dear Sir! you may turn any thing into ridicule. I allow, that a player of farce is not entitled to respect; he does a little thing: but he who can represent exalted characters and touch the noblest passions, has very respectable powers; and mankind have agreed in admiring great talents for the stage. We must consider, too, that a great player does what very few are capable to do: his art is a very rare faculty. *Who* can repeat Hamlet's soliloquy, 'To be, or not to be' as Garrick does it?" Johnson. "Anybody may. Jemmy, there (a boy about eight years old, who was in the room) will do it as well in a week." Boswell. "No, no, Sir: and as a proof of the merit of great acting, and of the value which mankind set upon it, Garrick has got a hundred thousand pounds." Johnson. "Is getting a hundred thousand pounds a proof of excellence? That has been done by a scoundrel commissary."

He found great fault with a gentleman of our acquaintance for keeping a bad table. "Sir, (said he,) when a man is invited to dinner, he is disappointed if he does not get something good. I advised Mrs. Thrale, who has no card-parties at her house, to give sweet-meats, and such good things, in an evening, as are not commonly given, and she would find com-

pany enough come to her; for everybody loves to have things which please the palate put in their way, without trouble or preparation." Such was his attention to the *minutiae* of life and manners.

I complained of a wretched changefulness, so that I could not preserve, for any long continuance, the same views of anything. It was most comfortable to me to experience, in Dr. Johnson's company, a relief from this uneasiness. His steady vigorous mind held firm before me those objects which my own feeble and tremulous imagination frequently presented in such a wavering state, that my reason could not judge well of them.

He found fault with me for using the phrase to *make* money. "Don't you see (said he) the impropriety of it? To *make* money is to *coin* it: you should say *get* money." The phrase, however, is, I think, pretty current. But Johnson was at all times jealous of infractions upon the genuine English language, and prompt to repress colloquial barbarisms; such as *pledging myself*, for *undertaking*; *line*, for *department*, or *branch*, as, the *civil line*, the *banking line*. He was particularly indignant against the almost universal use of the word *idea* in the sense of *notion*, of *opinion*, when it is clear that *idea* can only signify something of which an image can be formed in the mind. We may have an *idea* or *image* of a mountain, a tree, a building; but we cannot surely have an *idea* or *image* of an *argument* or *proposition*. Yet we hear the sages of the law "delivering their *ideas* upon the question under consideration;" and the first speakers in parliament "entirely coinciding in the *idea* which has been ably stated by an honorable member;" — or "reprobating an *idea* unconstitutional, and fraught with the most dangerous consequences to a great and free country." Johnson called this "modern cant."

This evening, while some of the tunes of ordinary composition were played with no great skill, my frame was agitated, and I was conscious of a generous attachment to Dr. Johnson, as my preceptor and friend, mixed with an affectionate regret that he was an old man, whom I should probably lose in a short time. I thought I could defend him at the point

of my sword. My reverence and affection for him were in full glow. I said to him, "My dear Sir, we must meet every year, if you don't quarrel with me." Johnson. "Nay, Sir, you are more likely to quarrel with me, than I with you. My regard for you is greater almost than I have words to express; but I do not choose to be always repeating it; write it down in the first leaf of your pocket-book, and never doubt of it again."

CHAPTER XII (1778)

JOHNSON SPEAKS ON MANY MATTERS

Johnson's Charity and Liberality — Dinner at Sir Joshua Reynolds's — Johnson on Horace — On Goldsmith — On Living in the Country — On Literature in France and England — On Old Age — On Potter's *Æschylus* — On Cadence in English Prose — On Elphinstone's *Martial* — On Criticising Authors — On War — Johnson's Refusal to be Teased with Questions — Johnson's Methods of Reading — On Flattery — The Meeting of Johnson and His Old Schoolmate Edwards — Edwards's Reminiscences of Johnson at College — Edwards on Being a Philosopher — Johnson's Impatience at Reminders of Old Age — Johnson's Taciturnity — Johnson on Americans — Boswell Offended — Reconciled to Johnson.

ON Wednesday, March 18, I arrived in London, and was informed by good Mr. Francis, that his master was better, and was gone to Mr. Thrale's at Streatham, to which place I wrote to him, begging to know when he would be in town.

On Friday, March 20, I found him at his own house, sitting with Mrs. Williams, and was informed that the room formerly allotted to me was now appropriated to a charitable purpose; Mrs. Desmoulins, and I think her daughter, and a Miss Carmichael, being all lodged in it. Such was his humanity, and such his generosity, that Mrs. Desmoulins herself told me, he allowed her half-a-guinea a week. Let it be remembered, that this was above a twelfth part of his pension.

His liberality, indeed, was at all periods of his life very remarkable. Mr. Howard, of Lichfield, at whose father's house Johnson had in his early years been kindly received, told me, that when he was a boy at the Charter-house, his father wrote to him to go and pay a visit to Mr. Samuel Johnson, which he accordingly did, and found him in an upper room, of poor appearance. Johnson received him with much courteousness, and talked a great deal to him,

as to a school-boy, of the course of his education, and other particulars. When he afterwards came to know and understand the high character of this great man, he recollected his condescension with wonder. He added, that when he was going away, Mr. Johnson presented him with half-a-guinea; and this, said Mr. Howard, was at a time when he probably had not another.

He said, "John Wesley's conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do."

Soon after our arrival at Thrale's, I heard one of the maids calling eagerly on another, to go to Dr. Johnson. I wondered what this could mean. I afterwards learned, that it was to give her a Bible, which he had brought from London as a present to her.

He was for a considerable time occupied in reading *Memoires de Fontenelle*, leaning and swinging upon the low gate into the court, without his hat.

On Thursday, April 9, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, with the Bishop of St. Asaph, (Dr. Shipley,) Mr. Allan Ramsay, Mr. Gibbon, Mr. Cambridge, and Mr. Langton. Mr. Ramsay had lately returned from Italy, and entertained us with his observations upon Horace's villa, which he had examined with great care. I relished this much, as it brought fresh into my mind what I had viewed with great pleasure thirteen years before. The Bishop, Dr. Johnson, and Mr. Cambridge joined with Mr. Ramsay, in recollecting the various lines in Horace relating to the subject.

The Bishop said, it appeared from Horace's writings that he was a cheerful, contented man. Johnson. "We have no reason to believe that, my lord. Are we to think Pope was happy, because he says so in his writings? We see in his writings what he wished the state of his mind to appear. Dr. Young, who pined for preferment, talks with contempt of it in his writings, and affects to despise everything that he did not despise." Bishop of St. Asaph. "He was like other chaplains, looking for vacancies: but that is not peculiar

to the clergy. I remember when I was with the army, after the battle of Lafeldt, the officers seriously grumbled that no general was killed." Boswell. "How hard is it that man can never be at rest." Ramsay. "It is not in his nature to be at rest. When he is at rest, he is in the worst state that he can be in; for he has nothing to agitate him. He is then like the man in the Irish song,

‘There liv’d a young man in Ballinacrazy,
Who wanted a wife for to make him unaisy.’”

Goldsmith being mentioned, Johnson observed, that it was long before his merit came to be acknowledged: that he once complained to him, in ludicrous terms of distress, "Whenever I write anything, the public *make a point* to know nothing about it:" but that his *Traveller* brought him into high reputation. Langton. "There is not one bad line in that poem; not one of Dryden's careless verses." Sir Joshua. "I was glad to hear Charles Fox say, it was one of the finest poems in the English language." Langton. "Why were you glad? You surely had no doubt of this before." Johnson. "No; the merit of *The Traveller* is so well established, that Mr. Fox's praise cannot augment it, nor his censure diminish it." Sir Joshua. "But his friends may suspect they had too great a partiality for him." Johnson. "Nay, Sir, the partiality of his friends was always against him. It was with difficulty we could give him a hearing. Goldsmith had no settled notions upon any subject; so he talked always at random. It seemed to be his intention to blurt out whatever was in his mind, and see what would become of it. He was angry too, when caught in an absurdity; but it did not prevent him from falling into another the next minute. I remember Chamier, after talking with him some time, said, 'Well, I do believe he wrote this poem himself: and, let me tell you, that is believing a great deal.' Chamier once asked him, what he meant by *slow*, the last word in the first line of *The Traveller*.

‘Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,’

Did he mean tardiness of locomotion? Goldsmith, who

would say something without consideration, answered, 'Yes.' I was sitting by, and said, 'No, Sir, you do not mean tardiness of locomotion; you mean, that sluggishness of mind which comes upon a man in solitude.' Chamier believed then that I had written the line, as much as if he had seen me write it. Goldsmith, however, was a man, who, whatever he wrote, did it better than any other man could do. He deserved a place in Westminster Abbey; and every year he lived, would have deserved it better. He had, indeed, been at no pains to fill his mind with knowledge. He transplanted it from one place to another; and it did not settle in his mind; so he could not tell what was in his own books."

We talked of living in the country. Johnson. "No wise man will go to live in the country, unless he has something to do which can be better done in the country. For instance, if he is to shut himself up for a year to study a science, it is better to look out to the fields, than to an opposite wall. Then, if a man walks out in the country, there is nobody to keep him from walking in again; but if a man walks out in London, he is not sure when he shall walk in again. A great city is, to be sure, the school for studying life; and 'The proper study of mankind is man,' as Pope observes." Boswell. "I fancy London is the best place for society; though I have heard that the very first society of Paris is still beyond any thing that we have here." Johnson. "Sir, I question if in Paris such a company as is sitting round this table could be got together in less than half a year. They talk in France of the felicity of men and women living together: the truth is, that there the men are not higher than the women, they know no more than the women do, and they are not held down in their conversation by the presence of women." Ramsay. "Literature is upon the growth, it is in its spring in France: here it is rather *passée*." ¹ Johnson. "Literature was in France long before we had it. Paris was the second city for the revival of letters: Italy had it first, to be sure. What have we done for literature, equal to what was done by the Stephani and others in France? Our liter-

¹ Past its prime.

ature came to us through France. Caxton printed only two books, Chaucer and Gower, that were not translations from the French; and Chaucer, we know, took much from the Italians. No, Sir, if literature be in its spring in France, it is a second spring; it is after a winter. We are now before the French in literature; but we had it long after them. In England, any man who wears a sword and a powdered wig is ashamed to be illiterate. I believe it is not so in France. Yet there is, probably, a great deal of learning in France, because they have such a number of religious establishments; so many men who have nothing else to do but study. I do not know this; but I take it upon the common principles of chance. Where there are many shooters, some will hit."

We talked of old age. Johnson (now in his seventieth year) said, "It is a man's own fault, it is from want of use, if his mind grows torpid in old age." The Bishop asked, if an old man does not lose faster than he gets. Johnson. "I think not, my Lord, if he exerts himself." One of the company rashly observed, that he thought it was happy for an old man that insensibility comes upon him. Johnson. (with a noble elevation and disdain,) "No, Sir, I should never be happy by being less rational." His Lordship mentioned a charitable establishment in Wales, where people were maintained and supplied with everything, upon the condition of their contributing the weekly produce of their labor; and he said, they grew quite torpid for want of property. Johnson. "They have no object for hope. Their condition cannot be better. It is rowing without a port."

When we went to the drawing-room, there was a rich assemblage. Besides the company who had been at dinner, there were Mr. Garrick, Mr. Harris of Salisbury, Dr. Percy, Dr. Burney, the Honourable Mrs. Cholmondeley, Miss Hannah More, &c. &c.

After wandering about in a kind of pleasing distraction for some time, I got into a corner, with Johnson, Garrick, and Harris. Garrick: (to Harris.) "Pray, Sir, have you read Potter's *Æschylus*?" Harris. "Yes, and think it pretty." Garrick. (to Johnson.) "And what think you, Sir, of it?"

Johnson. "I thought what I read of it *verbiage*: but upon Mr. Harris's recommendation, I will read a play. (To Mr. Harris.) Don't prescribe two." Mr. Harris suggested one, I do not remember which. Johnson. "We must try its effect as an English poem; that is the way to judge of the merit of a translation. Translations are, in general, for people who cannot read the original." I mentioned the vulgar saying, that Pope's *Homer* was not a good representation of the original. Johnson. "Sir, it is the greatest work of the kind that has ever been produced." Boswell. "The truth is, it is impossible perfectly to translate poetry. In a different language it may be the same tune, but it has not the same tone. Homer plays it on a bassoon; Pope on a flageolet." Harris. "I think, heroic poetry is best in blank verse; yet it appears that rhyme is essential to English poetry, from our deficiency in metrical quantities. In my opinion, the chief excellence of our language is numerous prose." Johnson. "Sir William Temple was the first writer who gave cadence to English prose. Before this time they were careless of arrangement and did not mind whether a sentence ended with an important word or an insignificant word, or with what part of speech it was concluded." Mr. Langton, who now had joined us, commended Clarendon. Johnson. "He is objected to for his parentheses, his involved clauses, and his want of harmony. But he is supported by his matter. It is, indeed, owing to a plethora of matter that his style is so faulty: every *substance*, (smiling to Mr. Harris,) has so many *accidents*. — To be distinct, we must talk *analytically*. If we analyze language, we must speak of it grammatically; if we analyze argument, we must speak of it logically." Garrick. "Of all the translations that ever were attempted, I think Elphinstone's *Martial* the most extraordinary. He consulted me upon it, who am a little of an epigrammatist myself, you know. I told him freely, 'You don't seem to have that turn.' I asked him if he was serious; and finding he was, I advised him against publishing. Why, his translation is more difficult to understand than the original; I thought him a man of some talents;

but he seems crazy in this." Johnson. "Sir, you have done what I had not courage to do. But he did not ask my advice, and I did not force it upon him, to make him angry with me." Garrick. "But as a friend, Sir—" Johnson. "Why, such a friend as I am with him—no." Garrick. "But if you see a friend going to tumble over a precipice?" Johnson. "That is an extravagant case, Sir. You are sure a friend will thank you for hindering him from tumbling over a precipice: but, in the other case, I should hurt his vanity, and do him no good. He would not take my advice. His brother-in-law, Strahan, sent him a subscription of fifty pounds, and said he would send him fifty more, if he would not publish." Garrick. "What! eh! is Strahan a good judge of an Epigram? Is not he rather an *obtuse* man, eh?" Johnson. "Why, Sir, he may not be a judge of an Epigram: but you see he is a judge of what is *not* an Epigram." Boswell. "It is easy for you, Mr. Garrick, to talk to an author as you talked to Elphinstone; you, who have been so long the manager of a theatre, rejecting the plays of poor authors. You are an old judge, who have often pronounced sentence of death. You are a practised surgeon, who have often amputated limbs; and though this may have been for the good of your patients, they cannot like you. Those who have undergone a dreadful operation are not very fond of seeing the operator again." Garrick. "Yes, I know enough of that. There was a reverend gentleman, (Mr. Hawkins,) who wrote a tragedy, the *Siege* of something, which I refused." Harris. "So, the siege was raised." Johnson. "Ay, he came to me and complained; and told me, that Garrick said his play was wrong in the *concoction*. Now, what is the concoction of a play?" (Here Garrick started, and twisted himself, and seemed sorely vexed; for Johnson told me, he believed the story was true.) Garrick. "I—I—I—said, *first* concoction." Johnson. (smiling.) "Well, he left out *first*. And Rich, he said, refused him in *false English*: he could show it under his hand." Garrick. "He wrote to me in violent wrath, for having refused his play: 'Sir, this is growing a very serious and terrible affair. I am

resolved to publish my play. I will appeal to the world; and how will your judgment appear!' I answered, 'Sir, notwithstanding all the seriousness, and all the terrors, I have no objection to your publishing your play; and as you live at a great distance, (Devonshire, I believe,) if you will send it to me, I will convey it to the press.' I never heard more of it, ha! ha! ha!"

We talked of war. Johnson. "Every man thinks meanly of himself for not having been a soldier, or not having been at sea." Boswell. "Lord Mansfield does not." Johnson. "Sir, if Lord Mansfield were in a company of General Officers and Admirals who have been in service, he would shrink; he'd wish to creep under the table." Boswell. "No; he'd think he could *try* them all." Johnson. "Yes, if he could catch them: but they'd try him much sooner. No, Sir: were Socrates and Charles the Twelfth of Sweden both present in any company, and Socrates to say, 'Follow me, and hear a lecture in philosophy;' and Charles, laying his hand on his sword, to say, 'Follow me, and dethrone the Czar;' a man would be ashamed to follow Socrates. Sir, the impression is universal: yet it is strange. As to the sailor, when you look down from the quarter-deck to the space below, you see the utmost extremity of human misery: such crowding, such filth, such stench!" Boswell. "Yet sailors are happy." Johnson. "They are happy as brutes are happy, with a piece of fresh meat, with the grossest sensuality. But, Sir, the profession of soldiers and sailors has the dignity of danger. Mankind reverence those who have got over fear, which is so general a weakness." Scott. "But is not courage mechanical, and to be acquired?" Johnson. "Why yes, Sir, in a collective sense. Soldiers consider themselves only as parts of a great machine." Scott. "We find people fond of being sailors." Johnson. "I cannot account for that, any more than I can account for other strange perversions of imagination."

His abhorrence of the profession of a sailor was uniformly violent; but in conversation he always exalted the profession of a soldier. And yet I have, in my large and various col-

lection of his writings, a letter to an eminent friend, in which he expresses himself thus: "My god-son called on me lately. He is weary, and rationally weary of a military life. If you can place him in some other state, I think you may increase his happiness, and secure his virtue. A soldier's time is passed in distress and danger, or in idleness and corruption." Such was his cool reflection in his study; but whenever he was warmed and animated by the presence of company, he, like other philosophers, whose minds are impregnated with poetical fancy, caught the common enthusiasm for splendid renown.

He sometimes could not bear being teased with questions. I was once present when a gentleman asked so many, as, "What did you do, Sir?" "What did you say, Sir?" that he at last grew enraged, and said, "I will not be put to the *question*. Don't you consider, Sir, that these are not the manners of a gentleman? I will not be baited with *what* and *why*; what is this? what is that? why is a cow's tail long? Why is a fox's tail bushy?" The gentleman, who was a good deal out of countenance, said, "Why, Sir, you are so good, that I venture to trouble you." Johnson. "Sir, my being so *good* is no reason why you should be so *ill*."

On Wednesday, April 15, I dined with Dr. Johnson at Mr. Dilly's. At Mr. Dilly's today were Mrs. Knowles, the ingenious Quaker lady, Miss Seward, the poetess of Lichfield, the Reverend Dr. Mayo, and the Rev. Mr. Beresford, tutor to the Duke of Bedford. Before dinner Dr. Johnson seized upon Mr. Charles Sheridan's *Account of the late Revolution in Sweden*, and seemed to read it ravenously, as if he devoured it, which was to all appearance his method of studying. "He knows how to read better than any one (said Mrs. Knowles); he gets at the substance of a book directly; he tears out the heart of it." He kept it wrapped up in the table-cloth in his lap during the time of dinner, from an avidity to have one entertainment in readiness, when he should have finished another; resembling (if I may use so coarse a simile) a dog who holds a bone in his paws in reserve, while he eats something else which has been thrown to him.

Talking of Miss —,¹ a literary lady, he said "I was obliged to speak to Miss Reynolds, to let her know that I desired she would not flatter me so much." Somebody now observed, "She flatters Garrick." Johnson. "She is in the right to flatter Garrick. She is in the right for two reasons; first, because she has the world with her, who have been praising Garrick these thirty years; and secondly, because she is rewarded for it by Garrick. Why should she flatter *me*? I can do nothing for her. Let her carry her praise to a better market. (Then turning to Mrs. Knowles.) You, Madam, have been flattering me all the evening; I wish you would give Boswell a little now. If you knew his merit as well as I do, you would say a great deal; he is the best traveling companion in the world."

We remained together till it was pretty late. Notwithstanding occasional explosions of violence, we were all delighted upon the whole with Johnson. I compared him at this time to a warm West Indian climate, where you have a bright sun, quick vegetation, luxuriant foliage, luscious fruits; but where the same heat sometimes produces thunder, lightning, and earthquakes, in a terrible degree.

And now I am to give a pretty full account of one of the most curious incidents in Johnson's life, of which he himself has made the following minute on this day: "In my return from church, I was accosted by Edwards, an old fellow-collegian, who had not seen me since 1729. He knew me, and asked if I remembered one Edwards; I did not at first recollect the name, but gradually as we walked along, recovered it, and told him a conversation that had passed at an ale-house between us. My purpose is to continue our acquaintance."

It was in Butcher-row that this meeting happened. Mr. Edwards, who was a decent-looking elderly man in grey clothes, and a wig of many curls, accosted Johnson with familiar confidence, knowing who he was, while Johnson returned his salutation with a courteous formality, as to a stranger. But as soon as Edwards had brought to his recol-

¹ Hannah More.

lection their having been at Pembroke College together nine-and-forty years ago, he seemed much pleased, asked where he lived, and said he should be glad to see him in Bolt-court. Edwards. "Ah, Sir! we are old men now." Johnson, (who never liked to think of being old:) "Don't let us discourage one another." Edwards. "Why, Doctor, you look stout and hearty, I am happy to see you so; for the newspapers told us you were very ill." Johnson. "Ay, Sir, they are always telling lies of *us old fellows*."

Wishing to be present at more of so singular a conversation as that between two fellow-collegians, who had lived forty years in London without ever having chanced to meet, I whispered to Mr. Edwards that Dr. Johnson was going home, and that he had better accompany him now. So Edwards walked along with us, I eagerly assisting to keep up the conversation. Mr. Edwards informed Dr. Johnson that he had practised long as a solicitor in Chancery, but that he now lived in the country upon a little farm, about sixty acres, just by Stevenage in Hertfordshire, and that he came to London (to Barnard's Inn, No. 6,) generally twice a week. Johnson appearing to me in a reverie, Mr. Edwards addressed himself to me, and expatiated on the pleasure of living in the country. Boswell. "I have no notion of this, Sir. What you have to entertain you is, I think, exhausted in half an hour." Edwards. "What? don't you love to have hope realized? I see my grass, and my corn, and my trees growing. Now, for instance, I am curious to see if this frost has not nipped my fruit-trees." Johnson, (who we did not imagine was attending:) "You find, Sir, you have fears as well as hopes." — So well did he see the whole, when another saw but the half of a subject.

When we got to Dr. Johnson's house, and were seated in his library, the dialogue went on admirably. Edwards. "Sir, I remember you would not let us say *prodigious* at College. For even then, Sir, (turning to me,) he was delicate in language, and we all feared him." Johnson, (to Edwards:) "From your having practised the law long, Sir, I presume you must be rich." Edwards. "No, Sir; I got a good deal of

money; but I had a number of poor relations to whom I gave a great part of it." Johnson. "Sir, you have been rich in the most valuable sense of the word." Edwards. "But I shall not die rich." Johnson. "Nay, sure, Sir, it is better to *live* rich, than to *die* rich." Edwards. "I wish I had continued at College." Johnson. "Why do you wish that, Sir?" Edwards. "Because I think I should have had a much easier life than mine has been. I should have been a parson, and had a good living, like Bloxham and several others, and lived comfortably." Johnson. "Sir, the life of a parson, of a conscientious clergyman, is not easy. I have always considered a clergyman as the father of a larger family than he is able to maintain. I would rather have Chancery suits upon my hands than the cure of souls. No, Sir, I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life." — Here taking himself up all of a sudden, he exclaimed, "O! Mr. Edwards! I'll convince you that I recollect you. Do you remember our drinking together at an ale-house near Pembroke gate? At that time, you told me of the Eton boy, who, when verses on our Saviour's turning water into wine were prescribed as an exercise, brought up a single line, which was highly admired:

'Vidit et erubuit lympa pudica Deum.'¹

and I told you of another fine line in Camden's *Remains*, an eulogy upon one of our Kings, who was succeeded by his son, a prince of equal merit:

'Mira cano, Sol occubuit, nox nulla secuta est.'²

Edwards. "You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson. I have tried too in my time to be a philosopher; but, I don't know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in." — Mr. Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Courtenay, Mr. Malone, and, indeed, all the eminent men to whom I have mentioned this, have thought it an exquisite trait of character. The truth is, that

¹ The modest water saw God and blushed.

² Wondrous things I sing: the sun sank to rest and no night followed.

philosophy, like religion, is too generally supposed to be hard and severe, at least so grave as to exclude all gaiety.

Edwards. "I have been twice married, Doctor. You, I suppose, have never known what it was to have a wife." Johnson. "Sir, I have known what it was to have a wife, and (in a solemn tender faltering tone) I have known what it was to *lose a wife*. — It had almost broke my heart."

Edwards. "How do you live, Sir? For my part, I must have my regular meals, and a glass of good wine. I find I require it." Johnson. "I now drink no wine, Sir. Early in life I drank wine; for many years I drank none. I then for some years drank a great deal." Edwards. "Some hogsheads, I warrant you." Johnson. "I then had a severe illness, and left it off, and I have never begun it again. I never felt any difference upon myself from eating one thing rather than another, nor from one kind of weather rather than another. There are people, I believe, who feel a difference; but I am not one of them. And as to regular meals, I have fasted from the Sunday's dinner to the Tuesday's dinner, without any inconvenience. I believe it is best to eat just as one is hungry: but a man who is in business, or a man who has a family, must have stated meals. I am a straggler. I may leave this town and go to Grand Cairo, without being missed here or observed there." Edwards. "Don't you eat supper, Sir?" Johnson. "No, Sir." Edwards. "For my part, now, I consider supper as a turn-pike through which one must pass, in order to get to bed."

Johnson. "You are a lawyer, Mr. Edwards. Lawyers know life practically. A bookish man should always have them to converse with. They have what he wants." Edwards. "I am grown old: I am sixty-five." Johnson. "I shall be sixty-eight next birthday. Come, Sir, drink water, and put in for a hundred."

Mr. Edwards mentioned a gentleman who had left his whole fortune to Pembroke College. Johnson. "Whether to leave one's whole fortune to a College be right must depend upon circumstances. I would leave the interest of the fortune I bequeathed to a College to my relations or my friends, for their

lives. It is the same thing to a College, which is a permanent society, whether it gets the money now or twenty years hence; and I would wish to make my relations or friends feel the benefit of it."

This interview confirmed my opinion of Johnson's most humane and benevolent heart. His cordial and placid behavior to an old fellow collegian, a man so different from himself; and his telling him that he would go down to his farm and visit him, showed a kindness of disposition very rare at an advanced age. He observed, "How wonderful it was that they had both been in London forty years, without having ever once met, and both walkers in the street too!" Mr. Edwards, when going away, again recurred to his consciousness of senility, and looking full in Johnson's face, said to him, "You'll find in Dr. Young,

'O my coevals! remnants of yourselves.'"

Johnson did not relish this at all; but shook his head with impatience. Edwards walked off seemingly highly pleased with the honor of having thus been noticed by Dr. Johnson. When he was gone, I said to Johnson, I thought him but a weak man. Johnson. "Why, yes, Sir. Here is a man who has passed through life without experience: yet I would rather have him with me than a more sensible man who will not talk readily. This man is always willing to say what he has to say." Yet Dr. Johnson had himself by no means that willingness which he praised so much, and I think so justly; for who has not felt the painful effect of the dreary void, when there is a total silence in a company, for any length of time; or, which is as bad, or perhaps worse, when the conversation is with difficulty kept up by a perpetual effort?

Johnson once observed to me, "Tom Tyers described me the best: 'Sir, (said he,) you are like a ghost; you never speak till you are spoken to.'"

On Saturday, April 18, I drank tea with him. He praised the late Mr. Duncombe, of Canterbury, as a pleasing man. "He used to come to me; I did not seek much after *him*.

Indeed I never sought much after anybody." Boswell. "Lord Orrery, I suppose." Johnson. "No, Sir; I never went to him but when he sent for me." Boswell. "Richardson?" Johnson. "Yes, Sir. But I sought after George Psalmanazar the most. I used to go and sit with him at an alehouse in the city."

The gentleman who had dined with us at Dr. Percy's came in. Johnson attacked the Americans with intemperate vehemence of abuse. I said something in their favor; and added, that I was always sorry, when he talked on that subject. This, it seems, exasperated him; though he said nothing at the time. The cloud was charged with sulphureous vapor, which was afterwards to burst in thunder. — We talked of a gentleman who was running out his fortune in London; and I said, "We must get him out of it. All his friends must quarrel with him, and that will soon drive him away." Johnson. "Nay, Sir, we'll send *you* to him. If your company does not drive a man out of his house, nothing will." This was a horrible shock, for which there was no visible cause. I afterwards asked him, why he had said so harsh a thing. Johnson. "Because, Sir, you made me angry about the Americans." Boswell. "But why did you not take your revenge directly?" Johnson. (smiling) "Because, Sir, I had nothing ready. A man cannot strike till he has his weapons." This was a candid and pleasant confession.

On Saturday, May 2, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where there was a very large company and a great deal of conversation; but owing to some circumstances which I cannot now recollect, I have no record of any part of it, except that there were several people there by no means of the Johnsonian school; so that less attention was paid to him than usual, which put him out of humor; and upon some imaginary offence from me, he attacked me with such rudeness, that I was vexed and angry, because it gave those persons an opportunity of enlarging upon his supposed ferocity and ill-treatment of his best friends. I was so much hurt, and had my pride so much roused, that I kept away

from him for a week; and, perhaps might have kept away much longer, nay, gone to Scotland without seeing him again, had not we fortunately met and been reconciled. To such unhappy chances are human friendships liable.

On Friday, May 8, I dined with him at Mr. Langton's. I was reserved and silent, which I suppose he perceived, and might recollect the cause. After dinner, when Mr. Langton was called out of the room, and we were by ourselves, he drew his chair near to mine, and said in a tone of conciliating courtesy, "Well, how have you done?" Boswell. "Sir, you have made me very uneasy by your behavior to me when we last were at Sir Joshua Reynolds's. You know, my dear Sir, no man has a greater respect and affection for you, or would sooner go to the end of the world to serve you. Now to treat me so —" He insisted that I had interrupted him, which I assured him was not the case; and proceeded — "But why treat me so before people who neither love you nor me?" Johnson. "Well, I am sorry for it. I'll make it up to you twenty different ways, as you please." Boswell. "I said today to Sir Joshua, when he observed that you *tossed* me sometimes — I don't care how often, or how high he tosses me, when only friends are present, for then I fall upon soft ground: but I do not like falling on stones, which is the case when enemies are present. — I think this a pretty good image, Sir." Johnson. "Sir, it is one of the happiest I have ever heard."

The truth is, there was no venom in the wounds which he inflicted at any time, unless they were irritated by some malignant infusion by other hands. We were instantly as cordial again as ever, and joined in hearty laugh at some ludicrous but innocent peculiarities of one of our friends. Boswell. "Do you think, Sir, it is always culpable to laugh at a man to his face?" Johnson. "Why, Sir, that depends upon the man and the thing. If it is a slight man, and a slight thing, you may; for you take nothing valuable from him."

CHAPTER XIII (1779-1781)

THE LIVES OF THE ENGLISH POETS

The Collection of English Poets — Johnson on His Seventy-Second Birthday — Anecdote of Johnson by Langton — On Having One's Portrait Made — On Physical and Moral Truth — On Huggins and Warton — His Affection for Beauclerk — On Burke's Extraordinary Talents — On Affectation — On Rude Sayings — On Goldsmith — Completion of *The Lives of the Poets* — Merits of This Work — The Life of Cowley — Of Waller — Of Pope — Of Swift — The Style of the *Lives* — Accusations Made Against it — Johnson's Rejoinder.

THIS year Johnson gave the world a luminous proof that the vigor of his mind in all its faculties, whether memory, judgment, or imagination, was not in the least abated; for this year came out the first four volumes of his *Prefaces, biographical and critical, to the most eminent of the English Poets*, published by the booksellers of London. The remaining volumes came out in the year 1780. The Poets were selected by the several booksellers who had the honorary copyright, which is still preserved among them by mutual compact, notwithstanding the decision of the House of Lords against the perpetuity of Literary Property. We have his own authority, that by his recommendation the poems of Blackmore, Watts, Pomfret, and Yalden, were added to the collection. Of this work I shall speak more particularly hereafter.

My readers will not be displeased at being told every slight circumstance of the manner in which Dr. Johnson contrived to amuse his solitary hours. He sometimes employed himself in chemistry, sometimes in watering and pruning a vine, sometimes in small experiments, at which those who may smile should recollect that there are moments which admit of being soothed only by trifles.

On his birthday, Johnson has this note; "I am now beginning the seventy-second year of my life, with more strength of body and greater vigor of mind, than I think is common at that age." But still he complains of sleepless nights and idle days and forgetfulness, or neglect of resolutions. He thus pathetically expresses himself: "Surely I shall not spend my whole life with my own total disapprobation."

"To James Boswell, Esq.

"Dear Sir,

"I am sorry to write you a letter that will not please you, and yet it is at last what I resolve to do. This year must pass without an interview; the summer has been foolishly lost, like many other of my summers and winters. I hardly saw a green field, but stayed in town to work, without working much.

"Mr. Thrale's loss of health has lost him the election; he is now going to Brighthelmston, and expects me to go with him; and how long I shall stay, I cannot tell. I do not much like the place, but yet I shall go, and stay while my stay is desired. We must, therefore, content ourselves with knowing what we know as well as man can know the mind of man, that we love one another, and that we wish each other's happiness, and that the lapse of a year cannot lessen our mutual kindness.

"I was pleased to be told that I accused Mrs. Boswell unjustly, in supposing that she bears me ill-will. I love you so much, that I would be glad to love all that love you, and that you love; and I have love very ready for Mrs. Boswell, if she thinks it worthy of acceptance. I hope all the young ladies and gentlemen are well.

"I take a great liking to your brother. He tells me that his father received him kindly, but not fondly; however, you seem to have lived well enough at Auchinleck, while you stayed. Make your father as happy as you can.

"You lately told me of your health: I can tell you in return, that my health has been, for more than a year past, better than it has been for many years before. Perhaps it

may please God to give us some time together before we are parted.

“I am, dear Sir,

“Yours, most affectionately,

“SAM. JOHNSON.

“October 17, 1780.”

Being disappointed in my hopes of meeting Johnson this year, so that I could hear none of his admirable sayings, I shall compensate for this want by inserting a collection of them, for which I am indebted to my worthy friend Mr. Langton, whose kind communications have been separately interwoven in many parts of this work. Very few articles of this collection were committed to writing by himself, he not having that habit: which he regrets, and which those who know the numerous opportunities he had of gathering the rich fruits of *Johnsonian* wit and wisdom, must ever regret. I however found, in conversation with him, that a good store of Johnsoniana was treasured in his mind; and I compared it to Herculaneum, or some old Roman field, which, when dug, fully rewards the labor employed. The authenticity of every article is unquestionable. For the expression, I, who wrote them down in his presence, am partly answerable.

“Having asked Mr. Langton if his father and mother had sat for their pictures, which he thought it right for each generation of a family to do, and being told they had opposed it, he said, ‘Sir, among the anfractuosities of the human mind, I know not if it may not be one, that there is a superstitious reluctance to sit for a picture.’”

“John Gilbert Cooper related, that soon after the publication of his *Dictionary*, Garrick being asked by Johnson what people said of it, told him, that among other animadversions, it was objected that he cited authorities which were beneath the dignity of such a work, and mentioned Richardson. ‘Nay, (said Johnson,) I have done worse than that: I have cited *thee*, David.’”

“When in good humor, he would talk of his own writings with a wonderful frankness and candor, and would even

criticize them with the closest severity. One day, having read over one of his *Ramblers*, Mr. Langton asked him, how he liked that paper; he shook his head, and answered, 'too wordy.' At another time, when one was reading his tragedy of *Irene* to a company at a house in the country, he left the room: and somebody having asked him the reason of this, he replied, 'Sir, I thought it had been better.'"

"He thus defined the difference between physical and moral truth: 'Physical truth is, when you tell a thing as it actually is. Moral truth is, when you tell a thing sincerely and precisely as it appears to you. I say such a one walked across the street; if he really did so, I told a physical truth. If I thought so, though I should have been mistaken, I told a moral truth.'"

"Huggins, the translator of Ariosto, and Mr. Thomas Warton, in the early part of his literary life, had a dispute concerning that poet, of whom Mr. Warton, in his *Observations on Spenser's Fairy Queen*, gave some account which Huggins attempted to answer with violence, and said, 'I will *militate* no longer against his *nescience*.' Huggins was master of the subject, but wanted expression. Mr. Warton's knowledge of it was then imperfect, but his manner lively and elegant. Johnson said, 'It appears to me, that Huggins has ball without powder, and Warton powder without ball.'"

"He would allow no settled indulgence of idleness upon principle, and always repelled every attempt to urge excuses for it. A friend one day suggested, that it was not wholesome to study soon after dinner. Johnson, 'Ah, Sir, don't give way to such a fancy. At one time of my life I had taken it into my head that it was not wholesome to study between breakfast and dinner.'"

"His affection for Topham Beauclerk was so great, that when Beauclerk was laboring under that severe illness which at last occasioned his death, Johnson said, (with a voice faltering with emotion,) 'Sir, I would walk to the extent of the diameter of the earth to save Beauclerk.'"

"He used to quote with great warmth, the saying of Aristotle recorded by Diogenes Laertius, that there was the same

difference between one learned and unlearned, as between the living and the dead."

"An eminent foreigner, when he was shown the British Museum, was very troublesome with many absurd inquiries. 'Now there, Sir, (said he,) is the difference between an Englishman and a Frenchman. A Frenchman must be always talking, whether he knows anything of the matter or not; an Englishman is content to say nothing, when he has nothing to say.'"

"He used frequently to observe, that men might be very eminent in a profession, without our perceiving any particular power of mind in them in conversation. 'It seems strange (said he) that a man should see so far to the right, who sees so short a way to the left. Burke is the only man whose common conversation corresponds with the general fame which he has in the world. Take up whatever topic you please, he is ready to meet you.'"

"Though he used to censure carelessness with great vehemence, he owned that he once, to avoid the trouble of locking up five guineas, hid them, he forgot where, so that he could not find them."

"A gentleman who introduced his brother to Dr. Johnson, was earnest to recommend him to the Doctor's notice, which he did by saying, 'When we have sat together some time, you'll find my brother grow very entertaining.' — 'Sir, (said Johnson,) I can wait.'"

"As Johnson always allowed the extraordinary talents of Mr. Burke, so Mr. Burke was fully sensible of the wonderful powers of Johnson. Mr. Langton recollects having passed an evening with both of them, when Mr. Burke repeatedly entered upon topics which it was evident he would have illustrated with extensive knowledge and richness of expression; but Johnson always seized upon the conversation, in which, however, he acquitted himself in a most masterly manner. As Mr. Burke and Mr. Langton were walking home, Mr. Burke observed that Johnson had been very great that night; Mr. Langton joined in this, but added, he could have wished to hear more from another person; (plainly in-

timating that he meant Mr. Burke.) ‘O, no, (said Mr. Burke), it is enough for me to have rung the bell to him.’”

“Beauclerk having observed to him of one of their friends, that he was awkward at counting money, ‘Why, Sir,’ said Johnson, ‘I am likewise awkward at counting money. But then, Sir, the reason is plain; I have had very little money to count.’”

“He had an abhorrence of affectation. Talking of old Mr. Langton, of whom he said, ‘Sir, you will seldom see such a gentleman, such are his stores of literature, such his knowledge in divinity, and such his exemplary life;’ he added, ‘and, Sir, he has no grimace, no gesticulation, no bursts of admiration on trivial occasions; he never embraces you with an overacted cordiality.’”

“Being in company with a gentleman who thought fit to maintain Dr. Berkeley’s ingenious philosophy, that nothing exists but as perceived by some mind; when the gentleman was going away, Johnson said to him, ‘Pray, Sir, don’t leave us; for we may perhaps forget to think of you, and then you will cease to exist.’”

“The late Mr. Fitzherbert told Mr. Langton, that Johnson said to him, ‘Sir, a man has no more right to *say* an uncivil thing, than to *act* one; no more right to say a rude thing to another man than to knock him down.’”

“Of Dr. Goldsmith he said, ‘No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had.’”

“An observation of Bathurst’s may be mentioned, which Johnson repeated, appearing to acknowledge it to be well founded; namely, it was somewhat remarkable how seldom, on occasion of coming into the company of any new person, one felt any wish or inclination to see him again.”

In 1781, Johnson at last completed his *Lives of the Poets*, of which he gives this account: “Some time in March I finished the *Lives of the Poets*, which I wrote in my usual way, dilatorily and hastily, unwilling to work, and working with vigor and haste.” In a memorandum previous to this, he says of them: “Written, I hope, in such a manner as may tend to the promotion of piety.”

This is the work, which of all Dr. Johnson's writings will perhaps be read most generally, and with most pleasure. Philology and biography were his favorite pursuits, and those who lived most in intimacy with him, heard him upon all occasions, when there was a proper opportunity, take delight in expatiating upon the various merits of the English Poets: upon the niceties of their characters, and the events of their progress through the world which they contributed to illuminate. His mind was so full of that kind of information, and it was so well arranged in his memory, that in performing what he had undertaken in this way, he had little more to do than to put his thoughts upon paper; exhibiting first each Poet's life, and then subjoining a critical examination of his genius and works. But when he began to write, the subject swelled in such a manner, that instead of prefaces to each poet, of no more than a few pages, as he had originally intended, he produced an ample, rich, and most entertaining view of them in every respect. The booksellers, justly sensible of the great additional value of the copyright, presented him with another hundred pounds, over and above two hundred, for which his agreement was to furnish such prefaces as he thought fit.

This was, however, but a small recompense for such a collection of biography, and such principles and illustrations of criticism, as, if digested and arranged in one system, by some modern Aristotle or Longinus, might form a code upon that subject, such as no other nation can show. As he was so good as to make me a present of the greatest part of the original, and indeed only manuscript of this admirable work, I have an opportunity of observing with wonder the correctness with which he rapidly struck off such glowing composition.

The *Life of Cowley* he himself considered as the best of the whole, on account of the dissertation which it contains on the *Metaphysical Poets*. Dryden, whose critical abilities were equal to his poetical, had mentioned them in his excellent Dedication of his Juvenal, but had barely mentioned them. Johnson has exhibited them at large, with such happy illus-

tration from their writings, and in so luminous a manner, that indeed he may be allowed the full merit of novelty, and to have discovered to us, as it were, a new planet in the poetical hemisphere.

In the *Life of Waller*, Johnson gives a distinct and animated narrative of public affairs in that variegated period, with strong yet nice touches of character; and having a fair opportunity to display his political principles, does it with an unqualified manly confidence, and satisfies his readers how nobly he might have executed a *Tory History* of his country.

So easy is his style in these *Lives*, that I do not recollect more than three uncommon or learned words; one, when giving an account of the approach of Waller's mortal disease, he says, "he found his legs grow *tumid*;" by using the expression his legs *swelled*, he would have avoided this; and there would have been no impropriety in its being followed by the interesting question to his physician, "What that *swelling* meant?" Another, when he mentions that Pope had *emitted* proposals; when *published* or *issued* would have been more readily understood; and a third, when he calls Orrery and Dr. Delaney, writers both undoubtedly *veracious*; when *true*, *honest*, or *faithful*, might have been used. Yet, it must be owned, that none of these are *hard* or *too big* words: that custom would make them seem as easy as any others; and that a language is richer and capable of more beauty of expression, by having a greater variety of synonyms.

I could, with pleasure, expatiate upon the masterly execution of the *Life of Dryden*, which we have seen was one of Johnson's literary projects at an early period, and which it is remarkable, that after desisting from it, from a supposed scantiness of materials, he should, at an advanced age, have exhibited so amply.

The *Life of Pope* was written by Johnson *con amore*,¹ both from the early possession which that writer had taken of his mind, and from the pleasure which he must have felt, in for ever silencing all attempts to lessen his poetical fame, by demonstrating his excellence, and pronouncing the following

¹ With love.

triumphant eulogium: "After all this, it is surely superfluous to answer the question that has once been asked, Whether Pope was a poet? otherwise than by asking in return, If Pope be not a poet where is poetry to be found? To circumscribe poetry by a definition, will only show the narrowness of the definer; though a definition which shall exclude Pope will not easily be made. Let us look round upon the present time, and back upon the past; let us enquire to whom the voice of mankind has decreed the wreath of poetry; let their productions be examined, and their claims stated, and the pretensions of Pope will be no more disputed."

I remember once to have heard Johnson say, "Sir, a thousand years may elapse before there shall appear another man with a power of versification equal to that of Pope." That power must undoubtedly be allowed its due share in enhancing the value of his captivating composition.

In the *Life of Swift*, it appears to me that Johnson had a certain degree of prejudice against that extraordinary man, of which I have elsewhere had occasion to speak. Mr. Thomas Sheridan imputed it to a supposed apprehension in Johnson, that Swift had not been sufficiently active in obtaining for him an Irish degree when it was solicited, but of this there was not sufficient evidence; and let me not presume to charge Johnson with injustice, because he did not think so highly of the writings of this author as I have done from my youth upwards. Yet that he had an unfavorable bias is evident, were it only from that passage in which he speaks of Swift's practice of saving, as, "first ridiculous and at last detestable;" and yet after some examination of circumstances, finds himself obliged to own, that "it will perhaps appear that he only liked one mode of expense better than another, and saved merely that he might have something to give."

While the world in general was filled with admiration of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, there were narrow circles in which prejudice and resentment were fostered, and from which attacks of different sorts issued against him. By some violent Whigs he was arraigned of injustice to Milton; by some Cambridge men of depreciating Gray; and his express-

ing with a dignified freedom what he really thought of George, Lord Lyttelton, gave offence to some of the friends of that nobleman, and particularly produced a declaration of war against him from Mrs. Montagu, the ingenious essayist on Shakespeare, between whom and his lordship a commerce of reciprocal compliments had long been carried on. In this war the smallest powers in alliance with him were of course led to engage, at least on the defensive. These minute inconveniences gave not the least disturbance to Johnson. He nobly said when I talked to him of the feeble, though shrill outcry which had been raised, "Sir, I considered myself as entrusted with a certain portion of truth. I have given my opinion sincerely; let them show where they think me wrong."

CHAPTER XIV (1781-1783)

THE DEATH OF THRALE: JOHNSON FEELS THE WEAKNESS OF OLD AGE

Boswell in London — Johnson's Manner of Walking — The Illness of Thrale — Johnson a Wine-Drinker Again — Johnson on the Society of Ladies — The Death of Thrale — An Essential Loss to Johnson — The Sale of Thrale's Brewery — "A Pretty Book called *The Rambler*" — At Mrs. Garrick's — Johnson on Courting the Great — Johnson's Resolutions of Diligence — Johnson's Ailments Increase — A Letter to Langton — Rules for a Long Journey — Mrs. Boswell and Johnson — Johnson Leaves Streatham for the Last Time — Johnson on Being a "Laird" — On the Scotch — On an Old Man's "Intellects" — On "the Laughters" — On the "Metaphysical Tailor" — Johnson's Clearness in Expression — His Attention to Details — On English Reserve — His Love of Little Children — His Fondness for Animals — Johnson's Cat Hodge — On Being in Parliament — On Cant — Johnson has a Stroke of the Palsy — His Fortitude and Patience — He Suffers from the Gout and Asthma.

ON Monday, March 19, I arrived in London, and on Tuesday, the 20th, met him in Fleet-street, walking, or rather indeed moving along; for his peculiar march is thus described in a very just and picturesque manner, in a short Life of him published very soon after his death:—"When he walked the streets, what with the constant roll of his head and the concomitant motion of his body, he appeared to make his way by that motion, independent of his feet." That he was often much stared at while he advanced in this manner may easily be believed; but it was not safe to make sport of one so robust as he was. Mr. Langton saw him one day, in a fit of absence, by a sudden start, drive the load off a porter's back, and walk forward briskly, without being conscious of what he had done. The porter was very angry, but stood still, and eyed the huge figure with much earnestness, till he was satisfied that his wisest course was to be quiet, and take up his burden again.

Our accidental meeting in the street after a long separation was a pleasing surprise to us both. He stepped aside with me into Falcon-court, and made kind enquiries about my family, and as we were in a hurry going different ways, I promised to call on him next day; he said he was engaged to go out in the morning. "Early, Sir?" said I. Johnson. "Why, Sir, a London morning does not go with the sun."

I found on visiting his friend, Mr. Thrale, that he was now very ill, and had removed, I suppose by the solicitation of Mrs. Thrale, to a house in Grosvenor-square. I was sorry to see him sadly changed in appearance.

He told me I might now have the pleasure to see Dr. Johnson drink wine again, for he had lately returned to it. When I mentioned this to Johnson, he said, "I drink it now sometimes, but not socially." The first evening that I was with him at Thrale's, I observed he poured a large quantity of it into a glass, and swallowed it greedily. Everything about his character and manners was forcible and violent; there never was any moderation; many a day did he fast, many a year did he refrain from wine; but when he did eat, it was voraciously; when he did drink wine, it was copiously. He could practice abstinence, but not temperance.

He said, "Mrs. Montagu has dropped me. Now, Sir, there are people whom one should like very well to drop, but would not wish to be dropped by." He certainly was vain of the society of ladies, and could make himself very agreeable to them, when he chose it; Sir Joshua Reynolds agreed with me that he could. Mr. Gibbon, with his usual sneer, controverted it, perhaps in resentment of Johnson's having talked with some disgust of his ugliness, which one would think a *philosopher* would not mind. Dean Marlay wittily observed, "A lady may be vain, when she can turn a wolf-dog into a lap-dog."

On Friday, March 30, I dined with him at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, with the Earl of Charlemont, Sir Annesley Stewart, Mr. Eliot, of Port-Eliot, Mr. Burke, Dean Marlay, Mr. Langton; a most agreeable day, of which I regret that every

circumstance is not preserved; but it is unreasonable to require such a multiplication of felicity.

On Sunday, April 1, I dined with him at Mr. Thrale's, with Sir Philip Jennings Clerk and Mr. Perkins, who had the superintendence of Mr. Thrale's brewery, with a salary of five hundred pounds a year. Mr. Thrale appeared very lethargic today. I saw him again on Monday evening, at which time he was not thought to be in immediate danger; but early in the morning of Wednesday the 4th, he expired. Johnson was in the house, and thus mentions the event: "I felt almost the last flutter of his pulse, and looked for the last time upon the face that for fifteen years had never been turned upon me but with respect and benignity." Upon that day there was a *Call* of the Literary Club; but Johnson apologized for his absence by the following note:

"Mr. Johnson knows that Sir Joshua Reynolds and the other gentlemen will excuse his incomppliance with the *Call*, when they are told that Mr. Thrale died this morning."

"Wednesday."

Mr. Thrale's death was a very essential loss to Johnson, who, although he did not foresee all that afterwards happened, was sufficiently convinced that the comforts which Mr. Thrale's family afforded him, would now in a great measure cease. He, however, continued to show a kind attention to his widow and children as long as it was acceptable: and he took upon him, with a very earnest concern, the office of one of his executors, the importance of which seemed greater than usual to him, from his circumstances having been always such, that he had scarcely any share in the real business of life. His friends of the Club were in hopes that Mr. Thrale might have made a liberal provision for him for his life, which, as Mr. Thrale left no son, and a very large fortune, it would have been highly to his honor to have done; and, considering Dr. Johnson's age, could not have been of long duration; but he bequeathed him only two hundred pounds, which was the legacy given to each of his executors. I could not but be somewhat diverted by hearing Johnson talk in a pompous manner of his new office, and particularly of the

concerns of the brewery, which it was at last resolved should be sold. Lord Lucan tells a very good story, which, if not precisely exact, is certainly characteristical: that when the sale of Thrale's brewery was going forward, Johnson appeared bustling about, with an ink-horn and pen in his button-hole, like an excise-man; and on being asked what he really considered to be the value of the property which was to be disposed of, answered, "We are not here to sell a parcel of boilers and vats, but the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice."

On Friday, April 13, being Good Friday, I went to St. Clement's church with him as usual. There I saw again his old fellow-collegian, Edwards, to whom I said, "I think, Sir, Dr. Johnson and you meet only at Church." "Sir, (said he,) it is the best place we can meet in, except Heaven, and I hope we shall meet there too." Dr. Johnson told me, that there was very little communication between Edwards and him, after their unexpected renewal of acquaintance. "But (said he, smiling) he met me once, and said, 'I am told you have written a very pretty book called *The Rambler*.' I was unwilling that he should leave the world in total darkness, and sent him a set."

On Friday, April 20, I spent with him one of the happiest days that I remember to have enjoyed in the whole course of my life. Mrs. Garrick, whose grief for the loss of her husband was, I believe, as sincere as wounded affection and admiration could produce, had this day, for the first time since his death, a select party of his friends to dine with her. The company was, Miss Hannah More, who lived with her, and whom she called her Chaplain; Mrs. Boscawen, Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Burney, Dr. Johnson, and myself. We found ourselves very elegantly entertained at her house in the Adelphi, where I have passed many a pleasing hour with him "who gladdened life." She looked well, talked of her husband with complacency, and while she cast her eyes on his portrait, which hung over the chimney-piece, said, that "death was now the most agreeable object to her." The very semblance of David Garrick was cheering.

We were all in fine spirits; and I whispered to Mrs. Boscawen, "I believe this is as much as can be made of life." In addition to a splendid entertainment, we were regaled with Lichfield Ale, which had a peculiar appropriate value. Sir Joshua, and Dr. Burney, and I, drank cordially of it to Dr. Johnson's health; and though he would not join us, he as cordially answered, "Gentlemen, I wish you all as well as you do me."

I asked him, if he was not dissatisfied with having so small a share of wealth, and none of those distinctions in the state which are the objects of ambition. He had only a pension of three hundred a year. Why was he not in such circumstances as to keep his coach? Why had he not some considerable office? Johnson. "Sir, I have never complained of the world; nor do I think that I have reason to complain. It is rather to be wondered at that I have so much. My pension is more out of the usual course of things than any instance that I have known. Here, Sir, was a man avowedly no friend to Government at the time, who got a pension without asking for it. I never courted the great; they sent for me; but I think they now give me up. They are satisfied: they have seen enough of me." Upon my observing that I could not believe this; for they must certainly be highly pleased by his conversation; conscious of his own superiority, he answered, "No, Sir; great Lords and great Ladies don't love to have their mouths stopped." This was very expressive of the effect which the force of his understanding and brilliancy of his fancy could not but produce; and, to be sure, they must have found themselves strangely diminished in his company. When I warmly declared how happy I was at all times to hear him; — "Yes, Sir, (said he); but if you were Lord Chancellor, it would not be so; you would then consider your own dignity."

In one of his little memorandum-books is the following minute:

"August 9, 3 P.M., aetat. 72, in the summer-house at Streatham.

"After innumerable resolutions formed and neglected, I

have retired hither, to plan a life of greater diligence, in hope that I may yet be useful, and be daily better prepared to appear before my Creator and my Judge, from whose infinite mercy I humbly call for assistance and support.

“My purpose is,

“To pass eight hours every day in some serious employment.

“Having prayed, I purpose to employ the next six weeks upon the Italian language, for my settled study.”

How venerably pious does he appear in these moments of solitude, and how spirited are his resolutions for the improvement of his mind, even in elegant literature, at a very advanced period of life, and when afflicted with many complaints.

In 1782, his complaints increased, and the history of his life this year is little more than a mournful recital of the variations of his illness, in the midst of which, however, it will appear from his letters, that the powers of his mind were in no degree impaired.

“*To Captain Langton, in Rochester.*

“*Dear Sir,*

“It is now long since we saw one another; and, whatever has been the reason, neither you have written to me, nor I to you. To let friendship die away by negligence and silence is certainly not wise. It is voluntarily to throw away one of the greatest comforts of this weary pilgrimage, of which when it is, as it must be, taken finally away, he that travels on alone, will wonder how his esteem could be so little. Do not forget me; you see that I do not forget you. It is pleasing in the silence of solitude to think, that there is one at least, however distant, of whose benevolence there is little doubt, and whom there is yet hope of seeing again.

“Of my life, from the time we parted, the history is mournful. The spring of last year deprived me of Thrale, a man whose eye for fifteen years had scarcely been turned upon me but with respect or tenderness; for such another friend the general course of human things will not suffer man to hope. I passed the Summer at Streatham, but there was no Thrale; and having idled away the summer with a weakly

body and neglected mind, I made a journey to Staffordshire on the edge of winter. The season was dreary, I was sickly, and found the friends sickly whom I went to see. After a sorrowful sojourn, I returned to a habitation possessed for the present by two sick women, where my dear old friend, Mr. Levett, to whom, as he used to tell me, I owe your acquaintance, died a few weeks ago, suddenly in his bed; there passed not, I believe, a minute between health and death. At night, as at Mrs. Thrale's I was musing in my chamber, I thought with uncommon earnestness, that however I might alter my mode of life, or whithersoever I might remove, I would endeavor to retain Levett about me; in the morning my servant brought me word that Levett was called to another state, a state for which, I think, he was not unprepared, for he was very useful to the poor. How much soever I valued him, I now wish that I had valued him more.

"I have myself been ill more than eight weeks of a disorder, from which, at the expense of about fifty ounces of blood, I hope I am now recovering.

"You, dear Sir, have, I hope, a more cheerful scene; you see George fond of his book, and the pretty misses airy and lively, with my own little Jenny equal to the best: and in whatever can contribute to your quiet or pleasure, you have Lady Rothes ready to concur. May whatever you enjoy of good be increased, and whatever you suffer of evil be diminished. I am, dear Sir,

"Your humble servant,

"Bolt-court, Fleet-street,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"*March 20, 1782.*"

"*To Mr. Perkins.*

"*Dear Sir,*

"I am much pleased that you are going a very long journey, which may by proper conduct restore your health and prolong your life.

"Observe these rules:

"1. Turn all care out of your head as soon as you mount the chaise.

"2. Do not think about frugality; your health is worth more than it can cost.

"3. Do not continue any day's journey to fatigue.

"4. Take now and then a day's rest.

"5. Get a smart sea sickness, if you can.

"6. Cast away all anxiety, and keep your mind easy.

"This last direction is the principal; with an unquiet mind, neither exercise, nor diet, nor physic can be of much use.

"I wish you, dear Sir, a prosperous journey, and a happy recovery. I am, dear Sir,

"Your most affectionate, humble servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"*July 28, 1782.*"

My wife was now so much convinced of his sincere friendship for me, and regard for her, that, without any suggestion on my part, she wrote him a very polite and grateful letter.

"*Dr. Johnson to Mrs. Boswell.*

"*Dear Lady,*

"I have not often received so much pleasure as from your invitation to Auchinleck. The journey thither and back is, indeed, too great for the latter part of the year, but if my health were fully recovered, I would suffer no little heat and cold, nor a wet or a rough road to keep me from you. I am, indeed, not without hope of seeing Auchinleck again; but to make it a pleasant place I must see its lady well, and brisk, and airy. For my sake, therefore, among many greater reasons, take care, dear Madam, of your health; spare no expense, and want no attendance that can procure ease, or preserve it. Be very careful to keep your mind quiet; and do not think it too much to give an account of your recovery to, Madam,

"Yours, &c.

"SAM. JOHNSON."

"*London, Sept. 7, 1782.*"

The death of Mr. Thrale had made a very material alteration with respect to Johnson's reception in that family. The manly authority of the husband no longer curbed the lively exuberance of the lady; and as her vanity had been fully gratified, by having the Colossus of Literature attached to her for many years, she gradually became less assiduous to please him. Whether her attachment to him was already divided by another object, I am unable to ascertain; but it is plain that Johnson's penetration was alive to her neglect or forced attention; for on the 6th of October this year, we find him making a "parting use of the library" at Streatham, and pronouncing a prayer, which he composed on leaving Mr. Thrale's family.

"Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness, remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place; and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when Thou givest, and when Thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me.

"To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide, and defend them, that they may so pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

One cannot read this prayer, without some emotions not very favorable to the lady whose conduct occasioned it.

On Friday, March 21, [1783] having arrived in London the night before, I was glad to find him at Mrs. Thrale's house, in Argyll-street, appearances of friendship between them being still kept up. I was shown into his room, and after the first salutation he said, "I am glad you are come: I am very ill." He looked pale, and was distressed with a difficulty of breathing: but after the common inquiries he assumed his usual strong animated style of conversation. Seeing me now for the first time as a *Laird*, or proprietor of land, he began thus: "Sir, the superiority of a country-gentleman over the people upon his estate is very agreeable: and he who says he does not feel it to be agreeable, lies; for it must be agreeable to

have a casual superiority over those who are by nature equal with us." Boswell. "Yet, Sir, we see great proprietors of land who prefer living in London." Johnson. "Why, Sir, the pleasure of living in London, the intellectual superiority that is enjoyed there, may counterbalance the other. Besides, Sir, a man may prefer the state of the country-gentleman upon the whole, and yet there may never be a moment when he is willing to make the change, to quit London for it."

He repeated to me his verses on Mr. Levett, with an emotion which gave them full effect; and then he was pleased to say, "You must be as much with me as you can. You have done me good. You cannot think how much better I am, since you came in."

He sent a message to acquaint Mrs. Thrale that I had arrived. I had not seen her since her husband's death. She soon appeared, and favored me with an invitation to stay to dinner, which I accepted. There was no other company but herself and three of her daughters, Dr. Johnson and I. She too said, she was very glad I was come, for she was going to Bath, and should have been sorry to leave Dr. Johnson before I came. This seemed to be attentive and kind; and I who had not been informed of any change, imagined all to be as well as formerly. He was little inclined to talk at dinner, and went to sleep after it; but when he joined us in the drawing-room, he seemed revived, and was again himself.

After musing for some time, he said, "I wonder how I should have any enemies; for I do harm to nobody." Boswell. "In the first place, Sir, you will be pleased to recollect that you set out with attacking the Scotch; so you got a whole nation for your enemies." Johnson. "Why, I own, that by my definition of *oats* I meant to vex them." Boswell. "Pray, Sir, can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the Scotch?" Johnson. "I cannot, Sir." Boswell. "Old Mr. Sheridan says, it was because they sold Charles the First." Johnson. "Then, Sir, old Mr. Sheridan has found out a very good reason."

He observed, "There is a wicked inclination in most people to suppose an old man decayed in his intellects. If a young or

middle-aged man, when leaving a company, does not recollect where he laid his hat, it is nothing; but if the same inattention is discovered in an old man, people will shrug up their shoulders and say, 'His memory is going.'

He said, "A man should pass a part of his time with *the laughers*, by which means anything ridiculous or particular about him might be presented to his view, and corrected." ¹

Mr. Hoole told him, he was born in Moorfields, and had received part of his early instruction in Grub-street. "Sir, (said Johnson, smiling) you have been *regularly* educated." Having asked who was his instructor, and Mr. Hoole having answered: "My uncle, Sir, who was a tailor;" Johnson, recollecting himself, said, "Sir, I knew him; we called him the *metaphysical* tailor. He was of a club in Old-street, with me and George Psalmanazar, and some others: but pray, Sir, was he a good tailor?" Mr. Hoole having answered that he believed he was too mathematical, and used to draw squares and triangles on his shop-board, so that he did not excel in the cut of a coat; — "I am sorry for it, (said Johnson,) for I would have every man to be master of his own business."

Johnson's attention to precision and clearness in expression was very remarkable. He disapproved of a parenthesis; and I believe in all his voluminous writings, not half a dozen of them will be found. He never used the phrases *the former* and *the latter*, having observed that they often occasioned obscurity; he therefore contrived to construct his sentences so as not to have occasion for them, and would even rather repeat the same words, in order to avoid them. Nothing is more common than to mistake surnames, when we hear them carelessly uttered for the first time. To prevent this, he used not only to pronounce them slowly and distinctly, but to take the trouble of spelling them; a practice which I have often followed, and which I wish were general.

Such was the heat and irritability of his blood, that not only did he pare his nails to the quick, but scraped the joints of his fingers with a pen-knife, till they seemed quite red and raw.

From Sir Joshua Reynolds's recollections.

The heterogeneous composition of human nature was remarkably exemplified in Johnson. His liberality in giving his money to persons in distress was extraordinary. Yet there lurked about him a propensity to paltry saving. One day I owed to him, that "I was occasionally troubled with a fit of *narrowness*." "Why, Sir, (said he,) so am I. *But I do not tell it.*" He has now and then borrowed a shilling of me; and when I asked him for it again, seemed to be rather out of humor. A droll little circumstance once occurred: As if he meant to reprimand my minute exactness as a creditor, he thus addressed me;—"Boswell, *lend me sixpence — not to be repaid.*"

This great man's attention to small things was very remarkable. As an instance of it, he one day said to me, "Sir, when you get silver in change for a guinea, look carefully at it; you may find some curious piece of coin."

Though a stern *true-born Englishman*, and fully prejudiced against all other nations, he had discernment enough to see, and candor enough to censure, the cold reserve too common among Englishmen towards strangers: "Sir, (said he,) two men of any other nation who are shown into a room together, at a house where they are both visitors, will immediately find some conversation. But two Englishmen will probably go each to a different window, and remain in obstinate silence. Sir, we as yet do not enough understand the common rights of humanity."

His acute observation of human life made him remark, "Sir, there is nothing by which a man exasperates most people more, than by displaying a superior ability or brilliancy in conversation. They seem pleased at the time; but their envy makes them curse him at their hearts."

Johnson's love of little children, which he discovered upon all occasions, calling them "pretty dears," and giving them sweetmeats, was an undoubted proof of the real humanity and gentleness of his disposition.

His uncommon kindness to his servants, and serious concern, not only for their comfort in this world, but their happiness in the next, was another unquestionable evidence of

what all, who were intimately acquainted with him, knew to be true.

Nor would it be just under this head, to omit the fondness which he showed for animals which he had taken under his protection. I never shall forget the indulgence with which he treated Hodge, his cat; for whom he himself used to go out and buy oysters, lest the servants, having that trouble, should take a dislike to the poor creature. I am, unluckily, one of those who have an antipathy to a cat, so that I am uneasy when in the room with one; and I own, I frequently suffered a good deal from the presence of this same Hodge. I recollect him one day scrambling up Dr. Johnson's breast, apparently with much satisfaction, while my friend smiling and half-whistling, rubbed down his back, and pulled him by the tail; and when I observed he was a fine cat, saying "Why, yes, Sir, but I have had cats whom I liked better than this;" and then as if perceiving Hodge to be out of countenance, adding, "But he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed."

I have no minute of any interview with Johnson till Thursday, May 15th, when I find what follows: Boswell. "I wish much to be in Parliament, Sir." Johnson. "Why, Sir, unless you come resolved to support any administration, you would be the worse for being in Parliament, because you would be obliged to live more expensively." Boswell. "Perhaps, Sir, I should be the less happy for being in Parliament. I never would sell my vote, and I should be vexed if things went wrong." Johnson. "That's cant, Sir. It would not vex you more in the house than in the gallery: public affairs vex no man." Boswell. "Have not they vexed yourself a little, Sir? Have not you been vexed by all the turbulence of this reign, and by that absurd vote of the House of Commons, 'That the influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished?'" Johnson. "Sir, I have never slept an hour less, nor eat an ounce less meat. I would have knocked the factious dogs on the head, to be sure; but I was not *vexed*." Boswell. "I declare, Sir, upon my honor, I did imagine I was vexed, and took a pride in it; but it *was*, perhaps, cant; for I own I neither

eat less, nor slept less." Johnson. "My dear friend, clear your *mind* of cant. You may *talk* as other people do; you may say to a man, 'Sir, I am your most humble servant.' You are *not* his most humble servant. You may say, 'These are bad times; it is a melancholy thing to be reserved to such times.' You don't mind the times. You tell a man, 'I am sorry you had such bad weather the last day of your journey, and were so much wet.' You don't care six-pence whether he is wet or dry. You may *talk* in this manner; it is a mode of talking in Society: but don't *think* foolishly."

On Friday, May 29, being to set out for Scotland next morning, I passed a part of the day with him in more than usual earnestness; as his health was in a more precarious state than at any time when I had parted from him. He, however, was quick and lively, and critical, as usual. I mentioned one who was a very learned man. Johnson. "Yes, Sir, he has a great deal of learning; but it never lies straight. There is never one idea by the side of another: 'tis all entangled: and then he drives it so awkwardly upon conversation!"

I assured him, that in the extensive and various range of his acquaintance there never had been any one who had a more sincere respect and affection for him than I had. He said, "I believe it, Sir. Were I in distress, there is no man to whom I should sooner come than to you. I should like to come and have a cottage in your park, toddle about, live mostly on milk, and be taken care of by Mrs. Boswell. She and I are good friends now; are we not?"

He embraced me, and gave me his blessing, as usual when I was leaving him for any length of time. I walked from his door today, with a fearful apprehension of what might happen before I returned.

My anxious apprehensions at parting with him this year proved to be but too well founded; for not long afterwards he had a dreadful stroke of the palsy, of which there are very full and accurate accounts in letters written by himself to show with what composure of mind, and resignation to the Divine Will his steady piety enabled him to behave.

"To Mr. Edmund Allen.

"Dear Sir,

"It has pleased God, this morning to deprive me of the powers of speech; and as I do not know but that it may be his further good pleasure to deprive me soon of my senses, I request you will, on the receipt of this note, come to me, and act for me, as the exigencies of my case may require.

"I am,

"Sincerely yours,

"June 17, 1783."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Such was the general vigor of his constitution, that he recovered from this alarming and severe attack with wonderful quickness; so that in July he was able to make a visit to Mr. Langton at Rochester, where he passed about a fortnight, and made little excursions as easily as at any time of his life. In August he went as far as the neighborhood of Salisbury, to Heale, the seat of William Bowles, Esq. a gentleman whom I have heard him praise for exemplary religious order in his family. In his diary I find a short but honorable mention of this visit: "August 28, I came to Heale without fatigue. 30. I am entertained quite to my mind."

His fortitude and patience met with severe trials during this year. The stroke of the palsy has been related circumstantially; but he was also afflicted with the gout, and was besides troubled with a complaint which not only was attended with immediate inconvenience, but threatened him with a surgical operation, from which most men would shrink. The complaint was a *sarcocoele*, which Johnson bore with uncommon firmness, and was not at all frightened while he looked forward to amputation. He was attended by Mr. Pott and Mr. Cruikshank.

Happily the complaint abated without his being put to the torture of amputation. But we must surely admire the manly resolution which he discovered, while it hung over him.

In a letter to the same gentleman¹ he writes, "The gout has

¹ Bennet Langton.

within these four days come upon me with a violence which I never experienced before. It made me helpless as an infant." — And in another, having mentioned Mrs. Williams, he says, — "whose death following that of Levett has now made my house a solitude. She left her little substance to a charity-school. She is, I hope, where there is neither darkness, nor want, nor sorrow."

Notwithstanding the complication of disorders under which Johnson now labored, he did not resign himself to despondency and discontent, but with wisdom and spirit endeavored to console and amuse his mind with as many innocent enjoyments as he could procure. Sir John Hawkins has mentioned the cordiality with which he insisted that such of the members of the old club in Ivy-lane as survived, should meet again and dine together, which they did, twice at a tavern, and once at his house: and in order to insure himself society in the evening for three days in the week, he instituted a club at the Essex Head, in Essex-street, then kept by Samuel Greaves, an old servant of Mr. Thrale's.

In the end of this year he was seized with a spasmodic asthma of such violence, that he was confined to the house in great pain, being sometimes obliged to sit all night in his chair, a recumbent posture being so hurtful to his respiration, that he could not endure lying in bed; and there came upon him at the same time that oppressive and fatal disease, a dropsy. It was a very severe winter, which probably aggravated his complaints; and the solitude in which Mr. Levett and Mrs. Williams had left him rendered his life very gloomy. Mrs. Desmoulins, who still lived, was herself so very ill, that she could contribute very little to his relief. He, however, had none of that unsocial shyness which we commonly see in people afflicted with sickness. He did not hide his head from the world, in solitary abstraction; he did not deny himself to the visits of his friends and acquaintances; but at all times, when he was not overcome by sleep, was ready for conversation as in his best days.

CHAPTER XV (1784)

THE LAST YEAR OF JOHNSON'S LIFE

A Letter to Boswell — To His God-child — Boswell in London — On His Friend Langton and the Next World — On Christian Charity — Johnson's Kind-Heartedness — A Trip to Oxford — The American Tourists — Johnson Truly Social — His Opinion of the Roast Mutton — The Value of Johnson's Roughness — Some of Johnson's Repartees — His Readiness to Make Apologies — The Endeavor to Secure Means for Sending Johnson to Italy — Boswell Makes Application Unknown to Johnson — Boswell's Last Meeting with Johnson — Second Marriage of Mrs. Thrale and Johnson's Mortification — Application for Johnson not Successful — Johnson in the Rain at Uttoxeter-Market — Imitators and Parodists of Johnson's Style — Johnson's Last Days — His Provision for His Servant Francis Barber — Incidents of His Final Illness — Johnson's Death — His Burial in Westminster Abbey.

And now I am arrived at the last year of the life of Samuel Johnson, a year in which, although passed in severe indisposition, he nevertheless gave many evidences of the continuance of those wondrous powers of mind, which raised him so high in the intellectual world. His conversation and his letters of this year were in no respect inferior to those of former years.

"To James Boswell, Esq.

"Dear Sir,

"I hear of many inquiries which your kindness has disposed you to make after me. I have long intended you a long letter which perhaps the imagination of its length hindered me from beginning. I will, therefore, content myself with a shorter.

"Having promoted the institution of a new club in the neighborhood, at the house of an old servant of Thrale's, I went thither to meet the company, and was seized with a spasmodic asthma, so violent, that with difficulty I got to my own house, in which I have been confined eight or nine weeks, and from which I know not when I shall be able to go even to church. The asthma, however, is not the worst. A dropsy

gains ground upon me, my legs and thighs are very much swollen with water, which I should be content if I could keep there; but I am afraid that it will soon be higher. My nights are very sleepless and very tedious. And yet I am extremely afraid of dying.

"My physicians try to make me hope, that much of my malady is the effect of cold, and that some degree at least of recovery is to be expected from vernal breezes and summer suns. If my life is prolonged to autumn, I should be glad to try a warmer climate; though how to travel with a diseased body, without a companion to conduct me, and with very little money, I do not well see. Ramsay has recovered his limbs in Italy; and Fielding was sent to Lisbon, where, indeed, he died; but he was, I believe, past hope when he went. Think for me what I can do.

"I received your pamphlet, and when I write again may perhaps tell you some opinion about it; but you will forgive a man struggling with disease his neglect of disputes, politics, and pamphlets. Let me have your prayers. My compliments to your lady and young ones. Ask your physicians about my case: and desire Sir Alexander Dick to write me his opinion.

"I am, dear Sir, &c.

"Feb. 11, 1784."

"SAM. JOHNSON."

What follows is a beautiful specimen of his gentleness and complacency to a young lady, his god-child, one of the daughters of his friend Mr. Langton, then I think in her seventh year. He took the trouble to write it in a large round hand, nearly resembling printed characters, that she might have the satisfaction of reading it herself. The original lies before me, but shall be faithfully restored to her; and I dare say will be preserved by her as a jewel, as long as she lives.

"To Miss Jane Langton, in Rochester, Kent.

"My Dearest Miss Jenny,

"I am sorry that your pretty letter has been so long without being answered; but, when I am not pretty well, I do not

always write plain enough for young ladies. I am glad, my dear, to see that you write so well, and hope that you mind your pen, your book, and your needle, for they are all necessary. Your books will give you knowledge, and make you respected; and your needle will find you useful employment when you do not care to read. When you are a little older, I hope you will be very diligent in learning arithmetic; and, above all, that through your whole life you will carefully say your prayers, and read your Bible.

“I am, my dear,

“Your most humble servant,

“May 10, 1784.”

“SAM. JOHNSON.”

On Wednesday, May 5, I arrived in London, and next morning had the pleasure to find Dr. Johnson greatly recovered. I but just saw him; for a coach was waiting to carry him to Islington, to the house of his friend the Reverend Mr. Strahan, where he went sometimes for the benefit of good air, which, notwithstanding his having formerly laughed at the general opinion upon the subject, he now acknowledged was conducive to health.

On Saturday, May 15, I dined with him at Dr. Brocklesby's, where were Colonel Vallancy, Mr. Murphy, and that ever-cheerful companion Mr. Devaynes, apothecary to his Majesty. Of these days, and others on which I saw him, I have no memorials, except the general recollection of his being able and animated in conversation, and appearing to relish society as much as the youngest man. When a person was mentioned, who said “I have lived fifty-one years in this world, without having had ten minutes of uneasiness;” he exclaimed, “The man who says so, lies; he attempts to impose on human credulity.” One of the company provoked him greatly by doing what he could least of all bear, which was quoting something of his own writing, against what he then maintained. “What, Sir, (cried the gentleman,) do you say to

‘The busy day, the peaceful night,
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by!’”

Johnson finding himself thus presented as giving an instance of a man who had lived without uneasiness, was much offended, for he looked upon such a quotation as unfair, his anger burst out in an unjustifiable retort, insinuating that the gentleman's remark was a sally of ebriety; "Sir, there is one passion I would advise you to command: when you have drunk out that glass, don't drink another." Here was exemplified what Goldsmith said of him, with the aid of a very witty image from one of Cibber's Comedies: "There is no arguing with Johnson: for if his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the butt end of it."

On Wednesday, May 19, I sat a part of the evening, with him, by ourselves. I observed, that the death of our friends might be a consolation against the fear of our own dissolution, because we might have more friends in the other world than in this. He perhaps felt this a reflection upon his apprehension as to death; and said with heat, "How can a man know *where* his departed friends are, or whether they will be his friends in the other world? How many friendships have you known formed upon principles of virtue? Most friendships are formed by caprice or by chance, mere confederacies in vice or leagues in folly."

We talked of our worthy friend Mr. Langton. He said, "I know not who will go to Heaven if Langton does not. Sir, I could almost say, *Sit anima mea cum Langtono*."¹ I mentioned a very eminent friend as a virtuous man. Johnson. "Yes, Sir; but — has not the evangelical virtue of Langton."

He however charged Mr. Langton with what he thought want of judgment upon an interesting occasion. "When I was ill, (said he) I desired he would tell me sincerely in what he thought my life was faulty. Sir, he brought me a sheet of paper, on which he had written down several texts of Scripture, recommending Christian charity. And when I questioned him what occasion I had given for such an animadversion, all that he could say amounted to this, — that I sometimes contradicted people in conversation. Now what harm does it do to any man to be contradicted?" Boswell.

¹ May my soul be with Langton.

"I suppose he meant the *manner* of doing it; roughly, — and harshly." Johnson. "And who is the worse for that?" Boswell. "It hurts people of weaker nerves." Johnson. "I know no such weak-nerved people." Mr. Burke, to whom I related this conference, said, "It is well, if when a man comes to die, he has nothing heavier upon his conscience than having been a little rough in conversation."

Johnson, at the time when the paper was presented to him, though at first pleased with the attention of his friend, whom he thanked in an earnest manner, soon exclaimed in a loud and angry tone, "What is your drift, Sir?" Sir Joshua Reynolds pleasantly observed, that it was a scene for a comedy, to see a penitent get into a violent passion and belabor his confessor.

He had now a great desire to go to Oxford, as his first jaunt after his illness; we talked of it for some days, and I had promised to accompany him. He was impatient and fretful to-night, because I did not at once agree to go with him on Thursday. When I considered how ill he had been, and what allowance should be made for the influence of sickness upon his temper, I resolved to indulge him, though with some inconvenience to myself, as I wished to attend the musical meeting in honor of Handel, in Westminster Abbey, on the following Saturday.

In the midst of his own diseases and pains, he was ever compassionate to the distress of others, and actively earnest in procuring them aid, as appears from a note to Sir Joshua Reynolds, of June, in these words: "I am ashamed to ask for some relief for a poor man, to whom, I hope, I have given what I can be expected to spare. The man importunes me, and the blow goes round. I am going to try another air on Thursday."

On Thursday, June 3, the Oxford Post-coach took us up in the morning at Bolt-court. The other two passengers were Mrs. Beresford and her daughter, two very agreeable ladies from America; they were going to Worcestershire, where they then resided. Frank had been sent by his master the day before to take places for us; and I found from the

way-bill that Dr. Johnson had made our names be put down. Mrs. Beresford, who had read it, whispered me, "Is this the great Dr. Johnson?" I told her it was; so she was then prepared to listen. As she soon happened to mention in a voice so low that Johnson did not hear it, that her husband had been a member of the American Congress, I cautioned her to beware of introducing that subject, as she must know how very violent Johnson was against the people of that country. He talked a great deal. But I am sorry I have preserved little of the conversation. Miss Beresford was so much charmed, that she said to me aside, "How he does talk! Every sentence is an essay." She amused herself in the coach with knotting; he would scarcely allow this species of employment any merit. "Next to mere idleness (said he) I think knotting is to be reckoned in the scale of insignificance; though I once attempted to learn knotting. Dempster's sister (looking to me) endeavored to teach me it; but I made no progress."

I was surprised at his talking without reserve in the public post-coach of the state of his affairs; "I have (said he) about the world I think above a thousand pounds, which I intend shall afford Frank an annuity of seventy pounds a year." Indeed his openness with people at a first interview was remarkable. He said once to Mr. Langton, "I think I am like Squire Richard in *The Journey to London*, '*I'm never strange in a strange place.*'" He was truly *social*. He strongly censured what is much too common in England among persons of condition, — maintaining an absolute silence, when unknown to each other; as, for instance, when occasionally brought together in a room before the master or mistress of the house has appeared. "Sir, that is being so uncivilized as not to understand the common rights of humanity."

At the inn where we stopped he was exceedingly dissatisfied with some roast mutton which he had for dinner. The ladies, I saw, wondered to see the great philosopher, whose wisdom and wit they had been admiring all the way, get into ill humor from such a cause. He scolded the waiter, saying,

"It is as bad as bad can be: it is ill-fed, ill-killed, ill-kept, and ill-dressed."

He bore the journey very well, and seemed to feel himself elevated as he approached Oxford, that magnificent and venerable seat of Learning, Orthodoxy, and Toryism. Frank came in the heavy coach, in readiness to attend him; and we were received with the most polite hospitality at the house of his old friend Dr. Adams, Master of Pembroke College, who had given us a kind invitation. Before we were set down, I communicated to Johnson, my having engaged to return to London directly, for the reason I have mentioned, but that I would hasten back to him again. He was pleased that I had made this journey merely to keep him company. He was easy and placid, with Dr. Adams, Mrs. and Miss Adams, and Mrs. Kennicot, widow of the learned Hebraean, who was here on a visit. He soon dispatched inquiries the which were made about his illness and recovery, by a short and distinct narrative; and then assuming a gay air, repeated from Swift,

"Nor think on our approaching ills,
And talk of spectacles and pills."

I fulfilled my intention by going to London, and returned to Oxford on Wednesday, the 9th of June, when I was happy to find myself again in the same agreeable circle at Pembroke College, with the comfortable prospect of making some stay. Johnson welcomed my return with more than ordinary glee.

Dr. Johnson and I went in Dr. Adams's coach to dine with Mr. Nowell, Principal of St. Mary Hall, at his beautiful villa at Iffley, on the banks of the Isis, about two miles from Oxford. While we were upon the road I had the resolution to ask Johnson whether he thought that the roughness of his manner had been an advantage or not, and if he would not have done more good if he had been more gentle. I proceeded to answer myself thus: "Perhaps it has been of advantage, as it has given weight to what you said: you could not, perhaps, have talked with such authority without it." Johnson. "No, Sir, I have done more good as I am. Ob-

scenity and Impiety have always been repressed in my company." Boswell. "True, Sir; and that is more than can be said of every Bishop. Greater liberties have been taken in the presence of a Bishop, though a very good man, from his being milder, and therefore not commanding such awe. Yet, Sir, many people who might have been benefited by your conversation have been frightened away. A worthy friend of ours has told me, that he has often been afraid to talk to you." Johnson. "Sir, he need not have been afraid, if he had anything rational to say. If he had not, it was better he did not talk."

On Wednesday, June 19, Dr. Johnson and I returned to London; he was not well to-day, and said very little, employing himself chiefly in reading Euripides. He expressed some displeasure at me, for not observing sufficiently the various objects upon the road. "If I had your eyes, Sir, (said he,) I should count the passengers." It was wonderful how accurate his observations of visual objects were, notwithstanding his imperfect eyesight, owing to a habit of attention. — That he was much satisfied with the respect paid to him at Dr. Adams's is thus attested by himself: "I returned last night from Oxford, after a fortnight's abode with Dr. Adams, who treated me as well as I could expect or wish; and he that contents a sick man, a man whom it is impossible to please, has surely done his part well."

After his return to London from this excursion, I saw him frequently, but have few memorandums; I shall therefore here insert some particulars which I collected at various times.

Johnson was present when a tragedy was read, in which there occurred this line

"Who rules o'er freemen should himself be free."

The company having admired it much, "I cannot agree with you (said Johnson:) It might as well be said,

"Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat."

Johnson having argued for some time with a pertinacious gentleman; his opponent, who had talked in a very puzzling

manner, happened to say, "I don't understand you, Sir;" upon which Johnson observed, "Sir, I have found you an argument; but I am not obliged to find you an understanding."

He seemed to take a pleasure in speaking in his own style; for when he had carelessly missed it, he would repeat the thought translated into it. Talking of the comedy of *The Rehearsal*, he said, "It has not wit enough to keep it sweet." This was easy;—he therefore caught himself, and pronounced a more round sentence; "It has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction."

No man was more ready to make an apology when he had censured unjustly than Johnson. When a proof-sheet of one of his works was brought to him, he found fault with the mode in which a part of it was arranged, refused to read it, and in a passion desired that the compositor might be sent to him. The compositor was Mr. Manning, a decent sensible man, who had composed about one half of his *Dictionary*, when in Mr. Strahan's printing-house; and a great part of his *Lives of the Poets*, when in that of Mr. Nichols; and who (in his seventy-seventh year) when in Mr. Baldwin's printing-house, composed a part of the first edition of this work concerning him. By producing the manuscript, he at once satisfied Dr. Johnson that he was not to blame. Upon which Johnson candidly and earnestly said to him, "Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon; Mr. Compositor, I ask your pardon, again and again."

He once in his life was known to have uttered what is called a *bull*: Sir Joshua Reynolds, when they were riding together in Devonshire, complained that he had a very bad horse, for that even when going down hill he moved slowly step by step. "Ay (said Johnson,) and when he *goes* up hill, he *stands still*."

He had a great aversion to gesticulating in company. He called once to a gentleman who offended him in that point. "Don't *attitudinise*." And when another gentleman thought he was giving additional force to what he uttered, by expressive movements of his hands, Johnson fairly seized them, and held them down.

On Tuesday, June 22, I dined with him at The Literary Club, the last time of his being in that respectable society. The other members present were the Bishop of St. Asaph, Lord Eliot, Lord Palmerston, Dr. Fordyce, and Mr. Malone. He looked ill; but had such a manly fortitude, that he did not trouble the company with melancholy complaints. They all showed evident marks of kind concern about him, with which he was much pleased, and he exerted himself to be as entertaining as his indisposition allowed him.

The anxiety of his friends to preserve so estimable a life, as long as human means might be supposed to have influence, made them plan for him a retreat from the severity of a British winter, to the mild climate of Italy. This scheme was at last brought to a serious resolution at General Paoli's, where I had often talked of it. One essential matter, however, I understood was necessary to be previously settled, which was obtaining such an addition to his income, as would be sufficient to enable him to defray the expense in a manner becoming the first literary character of a great nation, and independent of all his other merits, the author of *The Dictionary of the English Language*. The person to whom I above all others thought I should apply to negotiate this business, was the Lord Chancellor, because I knew that he highly valued Johnson, and that Johnson highly valued his lordship; so that it was no degradation of my illustrious friend to solicit for him the favor of such a man. I have mentioned what Johnson said of him to me when he was at the bar; and after his lordship was advanced to the seals, he said of him, "I would prepare myself for no man in England but Lord Thurlow. When I am to meet with him, I should wish to know a day before." How he would have prepared himself, I cannot conjecture. Would he have selected certain topics, and considered them in every view, so as to be in readiness to argue them at all points? and what may we suppose those topics to have been? I once started the curious inquiry to the great man who was the subject of this compliment: he smiled, but did not pursue it.

I first consulted with Sir Joshua Reynolds, who perfectly

coincided in opinion with me; and I therefore, though personally very little known to his Lordship, wrote to him, stating the case, and requesting his good offices for Dr. Johnson. I mentioned that I was obliged to set out for Scotland early in the following week, so that if his Lordship should have any commands for me as to this pious negotiation, he would be pleased to send them before that time; otherwise Sir Joshua Reynolds would give all attention to it.

This application was made not only without any suggestion on the part of Johnson himself, but was utterly unknown to him, nor had he the smallest suspicion of it. Any insinuations, therefore, which since his death have been thrown out, as if he had stooped to ask what was superfluous, are without any foundation. But, had he asked it, it would not have been superfluous; for though the money he had saved proved to be more than his friends imagined, or I believe than he himself, in his carelessness concerning worldly matters, knew it to be, had he traveled upon the Continent, an augmentation of his income would by no means have been unnecessary.

He now said, "He wished much to go to Italy, and that he dreaded passing the winter in England." I said nothing; but enjoyed a secret satisfaction in thinking that I had taken the most effectual measures to make such a scheme practicable.

On Monday, June 28, I had the honor to receive from the Lord Chancellor the following letter:

"To James Boswell, Esq.

"Sir,

"I should have answered your letter immediately; if, (being much engaged when I received it) I had not put it in my pocket, and forgot to open it till this morning.

"I am much obliged to you for the suggestion; and I will adopt and press it as far as I can. The best argument, I am sure, and I hope it is not likely to fail, is Dr. Johnson's merit. — But it will be necessary, if I should be so unfortunate as to miss seeing you, to converse with Sir Joshua on the sum it

will be proper to ask, — in short, upon the means of setting him out. It would be a reflection on us all, if such a man should perish for want of the means to take care of his health.

“Yours, &c.

“THURLOW.”

This letter gave me a very high satisfaction; I next day went and showed it to Sir Joshua Reynolds, who was exceedingly pleased with it. He thought that I should now communicate the negotiation to Dr. Johnson, who might afterwards complain if the attention with which he had been honored should be too long concealed from him. I intended to set out for Scotland next morning; but Sir Joshua Reynolds cordially insisted that I should stay another day, that Johnson and I might dine with him, that we three might talk of his Italian Tour, and, as Sir Joshua expressed himself, “have it all out.” I hastened to Johnson, and was told by him that he was rather better today. Boswell. “I am very anxious about you, Sir, and particularly that you should go to Italy for the winter, which I believe is your own wish.” Johnson. “It is, Sir.” Boswell. “You have no objections, I presume, but the money it would require.” Johnson. “Why, no, Sir.” — Upon which I gave him a particular account of what had been done, and read to him the Lord Chancellor’s letter. — He listened with much attention; then warmly said, “This is taking prodigious pains about a man.” — “O, Sir, (said I, with most sincere affection,) your friends would do everything for you.” He paused, — grew more and more agitated, till tears started into his eyes, and he exclaimed with fervent emotion, “God bless you all.” I was so affected that I also shed tears. — After a short silence, he renewed and extended his grateful benediction. “God bless you all, for Jesus Christ’s sake.” We both remained for some time unable to speak. — He rose suddenly and quitted the room, quite melted in tenderness. He stayed but a short time, till he had recovered his firmness; soon after he returned I left him, having first engaged him to dine at Sir

Joshua Reynolds's next day. — I never was again under that roof which I had so long revered.

On Wednesday, June 30, the friendly confidential dinner with Sir Joshua Reynolds took place, no other company being present. Had I known that this was the last time that I should enjoy in this world the conversation of a friend whom I so much respected, and from whom I derived so much instruction and entertainment, I should have been deeply affected. When I now look back to it, I am vexed that a single word should have been forgotten.

Both Sir Joshua and I were so sanguine in our expectations, that we expatiated with confidence on the liberal provision which we were sure would be made for him, conjecturing whether munificence would be displayed in one large donation, or in an ample increase of his pension. He himself caught so much of our enthusiasm, as to allow himself to suppose it not impossible that our hopes might in one way or other be realized. He said that he would rather have his pension doubled than a grant of a thousand pounds; "For, (said he,) though probably I may not live to receive as much as a thousand pounds, a man would have the consciousness that he should pass the remainder of his life in splendor, how long soever it might be." Considering what a moderate proportion an income of six hundred pounds a year bears to innumerable fortunes in this country, it *is* worthy of remark, that a man so truly great should think it splendor.

I accompanied him in Sir Joshua Reynolds's coach, to the entry of Bolt-court. He asked me whether I would not go with him to his house; I declined it, from an apprehension that my spirits would sink. We bade adieu to each other affectionately in the carriage. When he had got down upon the foot-pavement, he called out, "Fare you well;" and without looking back, sprung away with a kind of pathetic briskness, if I may use that expression, which seemed to indicate a struggle to conceal uneasiness, and impressed me with a foreboding of our long, long separation.

I remained one day more in town, to have the chance of talking over my negotiation with the Lord Chancellor: but

the multiplicity of his Lordship's important engagements did not allow of it; so I left the management of the business in the hands of Sir Joshua Reynolds.

Soon after this time Dr. Johnson had the mortification of being informed by Mrs. Thrale that, "what she supposed he never believed," was true; namely, that she was actually going to marry Signor Piozzi, an Italian music master. He endeavored to prevent it; but in vain. If she would publish the whole of the correspondence that passed between Dr. Johnson and her on the subject, we should have a full view of his real sentiments. As it is, our judgment must be biased by that characteristic specimen which Sir John Hawkins has given us: "Poor Thrale, I thought that either her virtue or her vice would have restrained her from such a marriage. She has now become a subject for her enemies to exult over; and for her friends, if she has any left, to forget or pity."

By a letter from Sir Joshua Reynolds, I was informed, that the Lord Chancellor had called on him, and acquainted him that the application had not been successful; but that his Lordship, after speaking highly in praise of Johnson, as a man who was an honor to his country, desired Sir Joshua to let him know, that on granting a mortgage of his pension, he should draw on his Lordship to the amount of five or six hundred pounds; and that his Lordship explained the meaning of the mortgage to be, that he wished the business to be conducted in such a manner, that Dr. Johnson should appear to be under the least possible obligation. Sir Joshua mentioned, that he had by the same post communicated all this to Dr. Johnson.

How Johnson was affected upon the occasion will appear from what he wrote to Sir Joshua Reynolds:

Ashbourne, Sept. 9. "Many words I hope are not necessary between you and me, to convince you what gratitude is excited in my heart by the Chancellor's liberality, and your kind offices."

To Mr. Henry White, a young clergyman, with whom he now formed an intimacy, so as to talk to him with great freedom, he mentioned that he could not in general accuse

himself of having been an undutiful son. "Once, indeed, (said he) I was disobedient; I refused to attend my father to Uttoxeter-market. Pride was the source of that refusal, and the remembrance of it was painful. A few years ago I desired to atone for this fault. I went to Uttoxeter in very bad weather and stood for a considerable time bareheaded in the rain, on the spot where my father's stall used to stand. In contrition I stood, and I hope the penance was expiatory."

As Johnson had now very faint hopes of recovery, and as Mrs. Thrale was no longer devoted to him, it might have been supposed that he would naturally have chosen to remain in the comfortable house of his beloved wife's daughter, and end his life where he began it. But there was in him an animated and lofty spirit, and however complicated diseases might depress ordinary mortals, all who saw him beheld and acknowledged the *invictum animum Catonis*.¹ Such was his intellectual ardor even at this time, that he said to one friend, "Sir, I look upon every day to be lost, in which I do not make a new acquaintance;" and to another, when talking of his illness, "I will be conquered; I will not capitulate." And such was his love of London, so high a relish had he of its magnificent extent, and variety of intellectual entertainment, that he languished when absent from it, his mind having become quite luxurious from the long habit of enjoying the metropolis; and, therefore, although at Lichfield surrounded with friends who loved and revered him, and for whom he had a very sincere affection, he still found that such conversation as London affords could be found nowhere else. These feelings, joined, probably, to some flattering hopes of aid from the eminent physicians and surgeons in London, who kindly and generously attended him without accepting fees, made him resolve to return to the capital.

He arrived in London the 16th of November, and next day sent to Dr. Burney the following note, which I insert as the last token of his remembrance of that ingenious and amiable man, and as another of the many proofs of the tenderness and benignity of his heart:

¹ The unconquerable mind of Cato.

"Mr. Johnson, who came home last night, sends his respects to dear Dr. Burney, and all the dear Burneys, little and great."

Soon after Johnson's return to the metropolis, both the asthma and dropsy became more violent and distressful. He had for some time kept a journal in Latin of the state of his illness, and the remedies which he used, under the title of *Ægri Ephemeris*, which he began on the 6th of July; but continued it no longer than the 8th of November; finding, I suppose, that it was a mournful and unavailing register. It is in my possession; and is written with great care and accuracy.

I shall now fulfill my promise of exhibiting specimens of various sorts of imitation of Johnson's style.

The ludicrous imitators of Johnson's style are innumerable. Their general method is to accumulate hard words, without considering, that, although he was fond of introducing them occasionally, there is not a single sentence in all his writings where they are crowded together, as in the first verse of the following imaginary Ode by him to Mrs. Thrale, which appeared in the newspapers:

"*Cervisial coctor's viduate dame,
Opins't thou this gigantic frame,
Procumb'g at thy shrine;
Shall, catenated by thy charms,
A captive in thy ambient arms,
Perennially be thine?*"

This, and a thousand other such attempts, are totally unlike the original, which the writers imagined they were turning into ridicule. There is not similarity enough for burlesque, or even for caricature.

Mr. Colman, in his *Prose on Several Occasions*, has "A Letter from Lexiphanes; containing Proposals for a *Glossary* or *Vocabulary* of the *Vulgar Tongue*: intended as a Supplement to a larger Dictionary." It is evidently meant as a sportive sally of ridicule on Johnson, whose style is thus imitated without being grossly overcharged. "It is easy to foresee, that the idle and illiterate will complain that I

have increased their labors by endeavoring to diminish them: and that I have explained what is more easy by what is more difficult — *ignotum per ignotius*. I expect, on the other hand, the liberal acknowledgments of the learned. He who is buried in scholastic retirement, secluded from the assemblies of the gay, and remote from the circles of the polite, will at once comprehend the definitions, and be grateful for such a seasonable and necessary elucidation of his mother-tongue." Annexed to this letter is a short specimen of the work, thrown together in a vague and desultory manner, not even adhering to alphabetical concatenation.¹

The serious imitators of Johnson's style, whether intentionally or by the imperceptible effect of its strength and animation, are, as I have had already occasion to observe, so many, that I might introduce quotations from a numerous body of writers in our language, since he appeared in the literary world. I shall point out only the following:

William Robertson, D.D.

"In other parts of the globe, man, in his rudest state, appears as Lord of the creation, giving law to various tribes of animals which he has tamed and reduced to subjection. The Tartar follows his prey on the horse which he has reared, or tends his numerous herds which furnish him both with food and clothing; the Arab has rendered the camel docile, and avails himself of its persevering strength; the Laplander has formed the reindeer to be subservient to his will; and even the people of Kamschatka have trained their dogs to labor. This command over the inferior creatures is one of the noblest prerogatives of man, and among the greatest efforts of his wisdom and power. Without this, his dominion is incomplete. He is a monarch who has no subjects; a master without servants; and must perform every operation by the strength of his own arm."

¹ *Hodge-podge*, — A culinary mixture of heterogeneous ingredients; applied metaphorically to all discordant combinations. *Tit for tat*, — Adequate retaliation. *Rigmarole*, — Discourse, incoherent and rhapsodical.

Edward Gibbon, Esq.

"Of all our passions and appetites, the love of power is of the most imperious and unsociable nature, since the pride of one man requires the submission of the multitude. In the tumult of civil discord the laws of Society lose their force, and their place is seldom supplied by those of humanity. The ardor of contention, the pride of victory, the despair of success, the memory of past injuries, and the fear of future dangers, all contribute to inflame the mind, and to silence the voice of pity."

Miss Burney.

"My family, mistaking ambition for honor, and rank for dignity, have long planned a splendid connection for me, to which, though my invariable repugnance has stopped any advances, their wishes and their views immovably adhere. I am but too certain they will now listen to no other. I dread, therefore, to make a trial where I despair of success; I know not how to risk a prayer with those who may silence me by a command."

My readers are now, at last, to behold Samuel Johnson preparing himself for that doom, from which the most exalted powers afford no exemption to man. Death had always been to him an object of terror; so that though by no means happy, he still clung to life with an eagerness at which many have wondered. At any time when he was ill, he was very pleased to be told that he looked better. An ingenious member of the *Eumelian Club* informs me, that upon one occasion, when he said to him that he saw health returning to his cheek, Johnson seized him by the hand and exclaimed, "Sir, you are one of the kindest friends I ever had."

It is not my intention to give a very minute detail of the particulars of Johnson's remaining days, of whom it was now evident, that the crisis was fast approaching, when he must "*die like men, and fall like one of the Princes.*" Yet it will be instructive, as well as gratifying to the curiosity of my readers to record a few circumstances, on the authenticity of which they may perfectly rely, as I have been at the

utmost pains to obtain an accurate account of his last illness, from the best authority.

Having no other relations, it had been for some time Johnson's intention to make a liberal provision for his faithful servant, Mr. Francis Barber, whom he looked upon as particularly under his protection, and whom he had all along treated truly as an humble friend. Having asked Dr. Brocklesby what would be a proper annuity to a favorite servant, and being answered that it must depend on the circumstances of the master; and, that in the case of a nobleman, fifty pounds a year was considered as an adequate reward for many years' faithful service; — "Then, (said Johnson,) shall I be *nobilissimus*,¹ for I mean to leave Frank seventy pounds a year, and I desire you to tell him so." It is strange, however, to think, that Johnson was not free from that general weakness of being averse to execute a will, so that he delayed it from time to time; and had it not been for Sir John Hawkins's repeatedly urging it, I think it is probable that his kind resolution would not have been fulfilled.

During his last illness, Johnson experienced the steady and kind attachment of his numerous friends. Mr. Hoole has drawn up a narrative of what passed in the visits which he paid him during that time, from the 10th of November to the 13th of December, the day of his death, inclusive, and has favored me with a perusal of it, with permission to make extracts, which I have done. Nobody was more attentive to him than Mr. Langton, to whom he tenderly said, *Te teneam moriens deficiente manu*.² And I think it highly to the honor of Mr. Windham, that his important occupations as an active statesman did not prevent him from paying assiduous respect to the dying Sage whom he revered. Mr. Langton informs me, that, "one day he found Mr. Burke and four or five more friends sitting with Johnson. Mr. Burke said to him, 'I am afraid, Sir, such a number of us may be oppressive to you.' — 'No, Sir, (said Johnson,) it is not so; and I must be in a wretched state, indeed, when your company

¹ Superlatively noble.

² Dying, may I hold you by my failing hand.

would not be a delight to me.' Mr. Burke, in a tremulous voice, expressive of being very tenderly affected, replied, 'My dear Sir, you have always been too good to me.' Immediately afterwards he went away. This was the last circumstance in the acquaintance of these two eminent men."

Amidst the melancholy clouds which hung over the dying Johnson, his characteristical manner showed itself on different occasions.

When Dr. Warren, in the usual style, hoped that he was better, his answer was, "No, Sir; you cannot conceive with what acceleration I advance towards death."

A man whom he had never seen before was employed one night to sit up with him. Being asked next morning how he liked his attendant, his answer was, "Not at all, Sir: the fellow's an idiot; he is as awkward as a turn-spit when first put into the wheel, and as sleepy as a dormouse."

Mr. Windham having placed a pillow conveniently to support him, he thanked him for his kindness, and said, "That will do, — all that a pillow can do."

Of his last moments, my brother, Thomas David, has furnished me with the following particulars:

"The Doctor, from the time that he was certain his death was near, appeared to be perfectly resigned, was seldom or never fretful or out of temper, and often said to his faithful servant, who gave me this account, 'Attend, Francis, to the salvation of your soul, which is the object of greatest importance:' he also explained to him passages in the Scripture, and seemed to have pleasure in talking upon religious subjects.

"On Monday, the 13th of December, the day on which he died, a Miss Morris, daughter to a particular friend of his, called, and said to Francis, that she begged to be permitted to see the Doctor, that she might earnestly request him to give her his blessing. Francis went into his room, followed by the young lady, and delivered the message. The Doctor turned himself in the bed, and said, 'God bless you, my dear!' These were the last words he spoke. — His difficulty of breathing increased till about seven o'clock in the evening, when Mr. Barber and Mrs. Desmoulins, who were sitting in

the room, observing that the noise he made in breathing had ceased, went to the bed, and found he was dead."

A few days before his death, he had asked Sir John Hawkins, as one of his executors, where he should be buried; and on being answered, "Doubtless, in Westminster Abbey," seemed to feel a satisfaction, very natural to a Poet; and indeed in my opinion very natural to every man of any imagination, who has no family sepulchre in which he can be laid with his fathers. Accordingly, upon Monday, December 20, his remains were deposited in that noble and renowned edifice; and over his grave was placed a large blue flag-stone, with this inscription:

"Samuel Johnson, LL.D.
Obiit XIII die Decembris
Anno Domini
M.DCC.LXXXIV.
Ætatis suae LXXV."

His funeral was attended by a respectable number of his friends, particularly such of the members of The Literary Club as were then in town; and was also honored with the presence of several of the Reverend Chapter of Westminster. Mr. Burke, Sir Joseph Banks, Mr. Windham, Mr. Langton, Sir Charles Bunbury, and Mr. Colman, bore his pall. His school-fellow, Dr. Taylor, performed the mournful office of reading the burial service.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCLUSION

Johnson as Guide, Philosopher, and Friend — His Figure and Countenance — Traits of His Character — His Moral Precepts and Maxims — His Union of a Logical Head with a Fertile Imagination — His Intellectual Strength and Dexterity.

I trust, I shall not be accused of affectation, when I declare, that I find myself unable to express all that I felt upon the loss of such a "Guide, Philosopher, and Friend." I shall, therefore, not say one word of my own, but adopt those of an eminent friend, which he uttered with an abrupt felicity, superior to all studied compositions: — "He has made a chasm, which not only nothing can fill up, but which nothing has a tendency to fill up. — Johnson is dead. — Let us go to the next best: — there is nobody; no man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson."

The character of Samuel Johnson has, I trust, been so developed in the course of this work, that they, who have honored it with a perusal, may be considered as well acquainted with him. As, however, it may be expected that I should collect into one view the capital and distinguishing features of this extraordinary man, I shall endeavor to acquit myself of that part of my biographical undertaking, however difficult it may be to do that which many of my readers will do better for themselves.

His figure was large and well formed, and his countenance of the cast of an ancient statue; yet his appearance was rendered strange and somewhat uncouth, by convulsive cramps, by the scars of that distemper which it was once imagined the royal touch could cure, and by a slovenly mode of dress. He had the use only of one eye; yet so much does mind

govern, and even supply the deficiency of organs, that his visual perceptions, as far as they extended, were uncommonly quick and accurate. So morbid was his temperament, that he never knew the natural joy of a free and vigorous use of his limbs: when he walked, it was like the struggling gait of one in fetters; when he rode, he had no command or direction of his horse; but was carried as if in a balloon. That with his constitution and habits of life he should have lived seventy-five years is a proof that an inherent *vis*¹ is a powerful preservative of the human frame.

Man is, in general, made up of contradictory qualities; and these will ever show themselves in strange succession, where a consistency in appearance at least, if not reality, has not been attained by long habits of philosophical discipline. In proportion to the native vigor of the mind, the contradictory qualities will be the more prominent, and more difficult to be adjusted; and, therefore, we are not to wonder, that Johnson exhibited an eminent example of this remark which I have made upon human nature. At different times, he seemed a different man, in some respects; not, however, in any great or essential article, upon which he had fully employed his mind, and settled certain principles of duty, but only in his manners, and in the display of argument and fancy in his talk. He was prone to superstition, but not to credulity. Though his imagination might incline him to a belief of the marvelous and the mysterious, his vigorous reason examined the evidence with jealousy. He was a sincere and zealous Christian, of high Church-of-England and monarchical principles, which he would not tamely suffer to be questioned; and had, perhaps, at an early period, narrowed his mind somewhat too much, both as to religion and politics. His being impressed with the danger of extreme latitude in either, though he was of a very independent spirit, occasioned his appearing somewhat unfavorable to the prevalence of that noble freedom of sentiment which is the best possession of man. Nor can it be denied, that he had many prejudices; which, however, frequently suggested many of

¹ Vital impulse.

his pointed sayings, that rather show a playfulness of fancy than any settled malignity. He was steady and inflexible in maintaining the obligations of religion and morality; both from a regard for the order of society, and from a veneration for the GREAT SOURCE of all order; correct, nay stern in his taste; hard to please, and easily offended; impetuous and irritable in his temper, but of a most humane and benevolent heart, which showed itself not only in a most liberal charity, as far as his circumstances would allow, but in a thousand instances of active benevolence. He was afflicted with a bodily disease, which made him often restless and fretful; and with a constitutional melancholy, the clouds of which darkened the brightness of his fancy, and gave a gloomy cast to his whole course of thinking: we, therefore, ought not to wonder at his sallies of impatience and passion at any time; especially when provoked by obtrusive ignorance, or presuming petulance; and allowance must be made for his uttering hasty and satirical sallies even against his best friends. And, surely, when it is considered, that, "amidst sickness and sorrow," he exerted his faculties in so many works for the benefit of mankind, and particularly that he achieved the great and admirable *Dictionary* of our language, we must be astonished at his resolution. The solemn text, "of him to whom much is given, much will be required," seems to have been ever present to his mind, in a rigorous sense, and to have made him dissatisfied with his labors and acts of goodness, however comparatively great; so that the unavoidable consciousness of his superiority was, in that respect, a cause of disquiet. He suffered so much from this, and from the gloom which perpetually haunted him, and made solitude frightful, that it may be said of him, "If in this life only he had hope, he was of all men most miserable." He loved praise, when it was brought to him; but was too proud to seek for it. He was somewhat susceptible of flattery. As he was general and unconfined in his studies, he cannot be considered as master of any one particular science; but he had accumulated a vast and various collection of learning and knowledge, which was so arranged in

his mind, as to be ever in readiness to be brought forth. But his superiority over other learned men consisted chiefly in what may be called the art of thinking, the art of using his mind; a certain continual power of seizing the useful substance of all that he knew, and exhibiting it in a clear and forcible manner; so that knowledge, which we often see to be no better than lumber in men of dull understanding, was, in him, true, evident, and actual wisdom. His moral precepts are practical; for they are drawn from an intimate acquaintance with human nature. His maxims carry conviction; for they are founded on the basis of common sense, and a very attentive and minute survey of real life. His mind was so full of imagery, that he might have been perpetually a poet; yet it is remarkable, that, however rich his prose is in this respect, his poetical pieces, in general, have not much of that splendor, but are rather distinguished by strong sentiment and acute observation, conveyed in harmonious and energetic verse, particularly in heroic couplets. Though usually grave, and even awful in his deportment, he possessed uncommon and peculiar powers of wit and humor; he frequently indulged himself in colloquial pleasantry; and the heartiest merriment was often enjoyed in his company; with this great advantage, that, as it was entirely free from any poisonous tincture of vice or impiety, it was salutary to those who shared in it. He had accustomed himself to such accuracy in his common conversation, that he at all times expressed his thoughts with great force, and an elegant choice of language, the effect of which was aided by his having a loud voice and a slow, deliberate utterance. In him were united a most logical head with a most fertile imagination, which gave him an extraordinary advantage in arguing: for he could reason close or wide, as he saw best for the moment. Exulting in his intellectual strength and dexterity, he could, when he pleased, be the greatest sophist that ever contended in the lists of declamation; and, from a spirit of contradiction and a delight in showing his powers, he would often maintain the wrong side with equal warmth and ingenuity; so that, when there was an audience, his

real opinions could seldom be gathered from his talk; though when he was in company with a single friend, he would discuss a subject with genuine fairness; but he was too conscientious to make error permanent and pernicious, by deliberately writing it; and, in all his numerous works, he earnestly inculcated what appeared to him to be the truth; his piety being constant and the ruling principle of all his conduct.

Such was Samuel Johnson, a man whose talents, acquirements, and virtues were so extraordinary, that the more his character is considered, the more he will be regarded by the present age, and by posterity, with admiration and reverence.

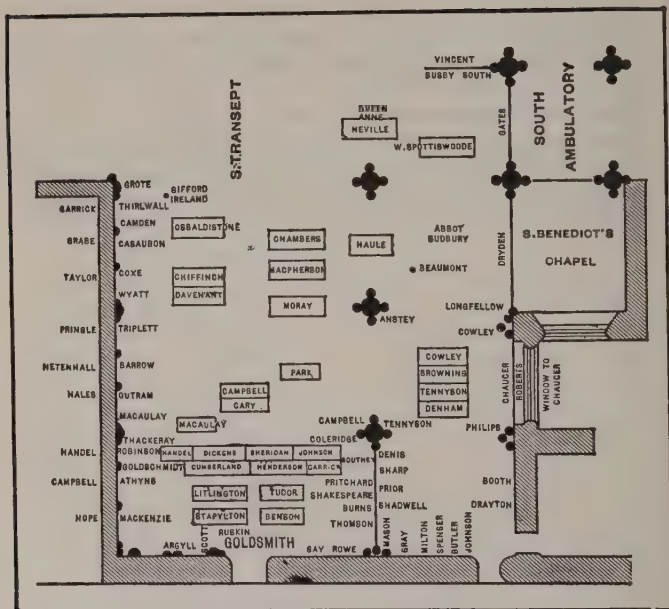


DIAGRAM OF POETS' CORNER
WESTMINSTER ABBEY

APPENDIX

I. *Brief Excerpts from Dr. Johnson's Works*

I had rather see the portrait of a dog that I know than all the allegorical paintings they can show me in the world.

It is, I believe, a very just observation, that men's ambition is generally proportioned to their capacity. Providence seldom sends any into the world with an inclination to attempt great things, who have not abilities likewise to perform them.

There is a kind of anxious cleanliness which I have always noted as the characteristic of a slattern; it is the superfluous scrupulosity of guilt, dreading discovery, and shunning suspicion: it is the violence of an effort against habit, which, being impelled by external motives, cannot stop at the middle point.

The chief glory of every people arises from its authors: whether I shall add anything by my own writings to the reputation of English literature must be left to time: much of my life has been lost under the pressures of disease; much has been trifled away; and much has always been spent in provision for the day that was passing over me; but I shall not think my employment useless or ignoble, if by my assistance foreign nations and distant ages gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of truth; if my labors afford light to the repositories of science, and add celebrity to Bacon, to Hooker, to Milton, and to Boyle.

When I am animated by this wish, I look with pleasure on my book, however defective, and deliver it to the world with the spirit of a man that has endeavored well.

It is one of the common distresses of a writer to be within a word of a happy period, to want only a single epithet to give amplification its full force, to require only a correspondent term in order to finish a paragraph with elegance and make one of its members answer to the other: but these deficiencies

cannot always be supplied; and after a long study and vexation, the passage is turned anew, and the web unwoven that was so nearly finished.

It is commonly supposed that the uniformity of a studious life affords no matter for a narration: but the truth is, that of the most studious life a great part passes without study. An author partakes of the common condition of humanity; he is born and married like another man; he has hopes and fears, expectations and disappointments, griefs and joys, and friends and enemies, like a courtier or a statesman; nor can I conceive why his affairs should not excite curiosity as much as the whisper of a drawing-room, or the factions of a camp.

Men of the pen have seldom any great skill in conquering kingdoms, but they have strong inclination to give advice.

We are blinded in examining our own labors by innumerable prejudices. Our juvenile compositions please us because they bring to our minds the remembrance of youth; our later performances we are ready to esteem because we are unwilling to think that we have made no improvement; what flows easily from the pen charms us because we read with pleasure that which flatters our opinion of our own powers; what was composed with great struggles of the mind we do not easily reject because we cannot bear that so much labor should be fruitless.

It should be diligently inculcated to the scholar, that unless he fixes in his mind some idea of the time in which each man of eminence lived, and each action was performed, with some part of the contemporary history of the rest of the world, he will consume his life in useless reading and darken his mind with a crowd of unconnected events; his memory will be perplexed with distant transactions resembling one another, and his reflections be like a dream in a fever, busy and turbulent, but confused and indistinct.

Composition is for the most part an effort of slow diligence and steady perseverance, to which the mind is dragged by necessity or resolution, and from which the attention is every moment starting to more delightful amusements.

Curiosity is, in great and generous minds, the first passion and the last; and perhaps always predominates in proportion to the strength of the contemplative faculties.

We do not indeed so often disappoint others as ourselves. We not only think more highly than others of our own abilities, but allow ourselves to form hopes which we never communicate, and please our thoughts with employments which none ever will allot us, and with elevations to which we are never expected to rise; and when our days and years have passed away in common business or common amusements, and we find at last that we have suffered our purposes to sleep till the time of action is past, we are reproached only by our own reflections; neither our friends nor our enemies wonder that we live and die like the rest of mankind; that we live without notice and die without memorial; they know not what task we had proposed, and therefore cannot discern whether it is finished.

Every man, however hopeless his pretensions may appear to all but himself, has some project by which he hopes to rise to reputation; some art by which he imagines that the notice of the world will be attracted; some quality good or bad which discriminates him from the common herd of mortals, and by which others may be persuaded to love or compelled to fear him.

He only confers favors generously who appears, when they are once conferred, to remember them no more.

Gratitude is a species of justice.

The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure but from hope to hope.

To be idle and to be poor have always been reproaches, and therefore every man endeavors with his utmost care to hide his poverty from others, and his idleness from himself.

No man ever yet became great by imitation.

Men are generally idle and ready to satisfy themselves and intimidate the industry of others by calling that impossible which is only difficult.

The true art of memory is the art of attention.

It may be laid down as a position which will seldom deceive, that when a man cannot bear his own company, there is something wrong.

Such is the delight of mental superiority, that none on whom nature or study has conferred it would purchase the gifts of fortune by its loss.

Money and time are the heaviest burdens of life, and the unhappiest of all mortals are those who have more of either than they know how to use.

The greatest part of mankind have no other reason for their opinions than that they are in fashion.

The public pleasures of far the greater part of mankind are counterfeit.

Poverty, like many other miseries of life, is often little more than an imaginary calamity. Men often call themselves poor, not because they want necessaries, but because they have not more than they want.

Just praise is only a debt, but flattery is a present.

It is always observable that silence propagates itself, and that the longer talk has been suspended, the more difficult it is to find anything to say.

Familiar comedy is often more powerful on the theatre than in the page; imperial tragedy is always less.

Most men think indistinctly and therefore cannot speak with exactness.

The task of every other slave has an end. The rower in time reaches the port; the lexicographer at last finds the conclusion of his alphabet; only the hapless wit has his labor always to begin, the call for novelty is never satisfied, and one jest only raises expectation of another.

Young men in haste to be renowned too frequently talk of books which they have scarcely seen.

By numbers here from shame or censure free
All crimes are safe, but hated poverty.
This, only this, the rigid law pursues;
This, only this, provokes the snarling muse.
The sober trader at a tatter'd cloak
Wakes from his dream, and labors for a joke
With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze,
And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways.

Of all the griefs that harass the distress'd,
 Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;
 Fate never wounds more deep the gen'rous heart,
 Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.

Has heaven reserved, in pity to the poor,
 No pathless waste, or undiscover'd shore?
 No secret island in the boundless main?
 No peaceful desert yet unclaim'd by Spain?
 Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,
 And bear oppression's insolence no more.
 This mournful truth is ev'rywhere confess'd,
 Slow rises worth, by poverty depress'd;
 But here more slow, where all are slaves to gold,
 Where looks are merchandise, and smiles are sold
 Where won by bribes, by flatteries implor'd,
 The groom retails the favors of his lord.

But hark! th' affrighted crowd's tumultuous cries
 Roll through the streets, and thunder to the skies.
 Rais'd from some pleasing dream of wealth and pow'r
 Some pompous palace, or some blissful bow'r,
 Aghast you start, and scarce with aching sight
 Sustain the approaching fire's tremendous light;
 Swift from pursuing horrors take your way,
 And leave your little All to flames a prey;
 Then thro' the world a wretched vagrant roam,
 For where can starving merit find a home?
 In vain your mournful narrative disclose,
 While all neglect, and most insult your woes.

(From *London*.)

On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,
 How just his hopes, let Swedish Charles decide:
 A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
 No dangers fright him, and no labors tire;
 O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,
 Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain;
 No joys to him pacific sceptres yield, —
 War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field;
 Behold surrounding kings their pow'rs combine,
 And one capitulate, and one resign:
 Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain;
 "Think nothing gain'd," he cries, "till naught remain
 On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,
 And all be mine beneath the polar sky."
 The march begins in military state,
 And nations on his eye suspended wait;
 Stern Famine guards the solitary coast,
 And Winter barricades the realms of Frost:
 He comes; nor want nor cold his course delay; —
 Hide, blushing Glory, hide Pultowa's day:
 The vanquish'd hero leaves his broken bands,
 And shows his miseries in distant lands;

Condemn'd a needy supplicant to wait,
 While ladies interpose and slaves debate.
 But did not Chance at length her error mend?
 Did no subverted empire mark his end?
 Did rival monarchs give the fatal wound?
 Or hostile millions press him to the ground?
 His fall was destin'd to a barren strand,
 A petty fortress, and a dubious hand.
 He left the name, at which the world grew pale,
 To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

(From *The Vanity of Human Wishes*.)

"Almighty and most merciful Father, who seest all our miseries, and knowest all our necessities, look down upon me, and pity me. Defend me from the violent incursion of evil thoughts, and enable me to form and keep such resolutions as may conduce to the discharge of the duties which Thy Providence shall appoint me; and so help me, by Thy Holy Spirit, that my heart may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found, and that I may serve Thee with a pure affection and a cheerful mind. Have mercy upon me; O God, have mercy upon me; years and infirmities oppress me, terror and anxiety beset me. Have mercy upon me, my Creator and my Judge. In all perplexities relieve and free me; and so help me by Thy Holy Spirit, that I may now commemorate the death of Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ as that, when this short and painful life shall have an end, I may, for His sake, be received to everlasting happiness. Amen." (From *Prayers and Meditations*.)

II. *Sayings and Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson*¹

The Bishop of Killaloe [Dr. Barnard] informed me, that at another time, when Johnson and Garrick were dining together in a pretty large company, Johnson humorously ascertaining the chronology of something, expressed himself thus: "That was the year when I came to London with two-pence half-penny in my pocket." Garrick overhearing him exclaimed, "Eh? what do you say? with two-pence half-penny in your pocket?" Johnson. "Why, yes; when I

¹ From portions of Boswell not included in the text and from other sources.

came with two-pence half-penny in my pocket, and thou, Davy, with three half-pence in thine." (Boswell.)

Johnson told me, that as soon as he found that the speeches [in the accounts of Parliamentary proceedings] were thought genuine, he determined that he would write no more of them; "for he would not be accessory to the propagation of falsehood." And such was the tenderness of his conscience, that a short time before his death he expressed his regret for his having been the author of fictions which had passed for realities. (Boswell.)

The character of a "respectable Hottentot," in Lord Chesterfield's letters, has been generally understood to be meant for Johnson, and I have no doubt that it was. But I remember when the *Literary Property* of those letters was contested in the Court of Sessions in Scotland, and Mr. Henry Dundas, one of the counsel for the proprietors, read this character as an exhibition of Johnson, Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, one of the Judges, maintained, with some warmth, that it was not intended as a portrait of Johnson, but of a late noble Lord, distinguished for abstruse science. I have heard Johnson himself talk of the character and say that it was meant for George Lord Lyttelton, in which I could by no means agree; for his Lordship had nothing of that violence which is a conspicuous feature in the composition. Finding that my illustrious friend could bear to have it supposed that it might be meant for him, I said, laughingly, that there was one trait which unquestionably did not belong to him; "he throws his meat anywhere but down his throat." "Sir, (said he), Lord Chesterfield never saw me eat in his life." (Boswell.)

Johnson, indeed, upon all other occasions, when I was in his company, praised the very liberal charity of Garrick. I once mentioned to him, "It is observed, Sir, that you attack Garrick yourself, but will suffer nobody else to do it." Johnson (smiling), "Why, Sir, that is true." (Boswell.)

We talked of belief in ghosts. He said, "Sir, I make a distinction between what a man may experience by the mere strength of his imagination, and what imagination cannot

possibly produce. Thus, suppose I should think that I saw a form, and heard a voice cry, 'Johnson, you are a very wicked fellow, and unless you repent you will certainly be punished;' my own unworthiness is so deeply impressed upon my mind, that I might *imagine* I thus saw and heard, and therefore I should not believe that an external communication had been made to me. But if a form should appear, and a voice should tell me that a particular man had died at a particular place, and a particular hour, a fact which I had no apprehension of, nor any means of knowing, and this fact, with all its circumstances, should afterwards be unquestionably proved, I should, in that case, be persuaded that I had supernatural intelligence imparted to me."

Here it is proper, once for all, to give a true and fair statement of Johnson's way of thinking upon the question, whether departed spirits are ever permitted to appear in this world, or in any way to operate upon human life. He has been ignorantly misrepresented as weakly credulous upon that subject; and, therefore, though I feel an inclination to disdain and treat with silent contempt so foolish a notion concerning my illustrious friend, yet as I find it has gained ground, it is necessary to refute it. The real fact then is, that Johnson had a very philosophical mind, and such a rational respect for testimony, as to make him submit his understanding to what was authentically proved, though he could not comprehend why it was so. Being thus disposed, he was willing to inquire into the truth of any relation of supernatural agency, a general belief of which has prevailed in all nations and ages. But so far was he from being the dupe of implicit faith, that he examined the matter with a jealous attention, and no man was more ready to refute its falsehood when he had discovered it. Churchill in his poem entitled *The Ghost* availed himself of the absurd credulity imputed to Johnson, and drew a caricature of him under the name of *Pomposo*, representing him as one of the believers of the story of a Ghost in Cock-lane, which, in the year 1762, had gained very general credit in London. Many of my readers, I am convinced, are to this hour under the

impression that Johnson was thus foolishly deceived. It will therefore surprise them a good deal when they are informed upon undoubted authority, that Johnson was one of those by whom the imposture was detected. The story had become so popular, that he thought it should be investigated; and in this research he was assisted by the Reverend Dr. Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury, the great detector of impostures; who informs me, that after the gentlemen who went and examined into the evidence were satisfied of its falsity, Johnson wrote in their presence an account of it, which was published in the newspapers and *Gentleman's Magazine*, and undeceived the world. [The account was as follows: "On the night of the 1st of February, many gentlemen eminent for their rank and character, were, by the invitation of the Reverend Mr. Aldrich, of Clerkenwell, assembled at his house, for the examination of the noises supposed to be made by a departed spirit, for the detection of some enormous crime.

"About ten at night the gentlemen met in the chamber in which the girl, supposed to be disturbed by a spirit, had, with proper caution, been put to bed by several ladies. They sat rather more than an hour, and hearing nothing, went downstairs, when they interrogated the father of the girl, who denied, in the strongest terms, any knowledge or belief of fraud.

"The supposed spirit had before publicly promised, by an affirmative knock, that it would attend one of the gentlemen into the vault under the church of St. John, Clerkenwell, where the body is deposited, and give a token of her presence there, by a knock upon her coffin; it was therefore determined to make this trial of the existence or veracity of the supposed spirit.

"While they were enquiring and deliberating, they were summoned into the girl's chamber by some ladies who were near her bed, and who had heard knocks and scratches. When the gentlemen entered, the girl declared that she felt the spirit like a mouse upon her back, and was required to hold her hands out of bed. From that time, though the

spirit was very solemnly required to manifest its existence by appearance, by impression on the hand or body of any present, by scratches, knocks, or any other agency, no evidence of any preternatural power was exhibited.

"The Spirit was then very seriously advertised that the person to whom the promise was made of striking the coffin, was then about to visit the vault, and that the performance of the promise was then claimed. The company at one o'clock went into the church, and the gentleman to whom the promise was made went with another into the vault. The spirit was solemnly required to perform its promise, but nothing more than silence ensued. The person supposed to be accused by the spirit then went down with several others, but no effect was perceived. Upon their return they examined the girl, but could draw no confession from her. Between two and three she desired and was permitted to go home with her father.

"It is, therefore, the opinion of the whole assembly, that the child has some art of making or counterfeiting a particular noise, and that there is no agency of any higher cause."] (Boswell.)

He expressed great indignation at the imposture of the Cock-lane Ghost and related, with much satisfaction, how he had assisted in detecting the cheat, and had published an account of it in the newspapers. (Boswell.)

Idleness is a disease which must be combated; but I would not advise a rigid adherence to a particular plan of study. I myself have never persisted in any plan for two days together. A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good. A young man should read five hours in a day, and so may acquire a great deal of knowledge. (Boswell, quoting Johnson.)

One day when dining at old Mr. Langton's, where Miss Roberts, his niece, was one of the company, Johnson, with his usual complacent attention to the fair sex, took her by the hand and said, "My dear, I hope you are a Jacobite." Old Mr. Langton, who, though a high and steady Tory, was

attached to the present Royal Family, seemed offended, and asked Johnson, with great warmth, what he could mean by putting such a question to his niece. "Why, Sir, (said Johnson,) I meant no offence to your niece, I meant her a great compliment. A Jacobite, Sir, believes in the divine right of Kings. He that believes in the divine right of Kings believes in a Divinity. A Jacobite believes in the divine right of Bishops. He that believes in the divine right of Bishops believes in the divine authority of the Christian religion. Therefore, Sir, a Jacobite is neither an Atheist nor a Deist. That cannot be said of a Whig; for *Whiggism is a negation of all principle.*" (Boswell.)

One day at Sir Joshua's table, when it was related that Mrs. Montague, in an excess of compliment to the author of a modern tragedy, had exclaimed, "I tremble for Shakespeare;" Johnson said, "When Shakespeare has got —— for his rival, and Mrs. Montague for his defender, he is in a poor state indeed." (Boswell.)

"Lord Lyttelton's *Dialogues*, he deemed a nugatory performance. 'That man, (said he,) sat down to write a book, to tell the world what the world had all his life been telling him.'" (Boswell.)

"Sir, (said Johnson,) I am a great friend to public amusements; for they keep people from vice." (Boswell.)

"The misfortune of Goldsmith in conversation is this: he goes on without knowing how he is to get off. His genius is great, but his knowledge is small. As they say of a generous man, it is a pity he is not rich, we may say of Goldsmith, it is a pity he is not knowing." (Boswell.)

I spoke of Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*, in the Scottish dialect, as the best pastoral that had ever been written; not only abounding with beautiful rural imagery, and just and pleasing sentiments, but being a real picture of manners; and I offered to teach Dr. Johnson to understand it. "No, Sir, (said he,) I won't learn it. You shall retain your superiority by my not knowing it." (Boswell.)

There is nothing, I think, in which the power of art is shown so much as in playing the fiddle. In all other things

we can do something at first. Any man will forge a bar of iron, if you give him a hammer; not so well as a smith, but tolerably. A man will saw a piece of wood, and make a box, though a clumsy one; but give him a fiddle, and a fiddle-stick, and he can do nothing. (Boswell, quoting Johnson.)

Johnson's own superlative powers of wit set him above any risk of such uneasiness. Garrick had remarked to me of him, a few days before, "Rabelais and all other wits are nothing compared with him. You may be diverted by them; but Johnson gives you a forcible hug, and shakes laughter out of you, whether you will or no." (Boswell.)

He described the father of one of his friends thus: "Sir, he was so exuberant a talker at public meetings, that the gentlemen of his county were afraid of him. No business could be done for his declamation." (Boswell.)

Next day I dined with Johnson at Mr. Thrale's. He attacked Gray, calling him "a dull fellow." Boswell. "I understand he was reserved, and might appear dull in company; but surely he was not dull in poetry." Johnson. "Sir, he was dull in company, dull in his closet, dull everywhere. He was dull in a new way, and that made many people think him *great*. He was a mechanical poet." (Boswell.)

It is remarkable that he never, so far as I know, assumed his title of *Doctor*, but he called himself *Mr.* Johnson, as appears from many of his cards or notes to myself, and I have seen many from him to other persons, in which he uniformly takes that designation. — I once observed on his table a letter directed to him with the additional *Esquire*, and objected to it as being a designation inferior to that of *Doctor*; but he checked me, and seemed pleased with it, because, as I conjectured, he liked to be sometimes taken out of the class of literary men, and to be merely *genteel*, — *un gentilhomme comme un autre*. (Boswell.)

Mrs. Thrale told us, that Tom Davies repeated, in a very bald manner, the story of Dr. Johnson's first repartee to me which I have related exactly. He made me say, "I was

born in Scotland," instead of "I come from Scotland;" so that Johnson's saying, "That, Sir, is what a great many of your countrymen cannot help," had no point or even meaning: and that upon this being mentioned to Mr. Fitzherbert, he observed, "It is not every man that can carry a *bon-mot*." (Boswell.)

We were by no means pleased with our inn at Bristol. "Let us see now, (said I,) how we should describe it." Johnson was ready with his raillery. "Describe it, Sir? — Why, it was so bad, that Boswell wished to be in Scotland!" (Boswell.)

Talking of biography, I said, in writing a life, a man's peculiarities should be mentioned, because they mark his character. Johnson. "Sir, there is no doubt as to peculiarities: the question is, whether a man's vices should be mentioned; for instance, whether it should be mentioned that Addison and Parnell drank too freely; for people will probably more easily indulge in drinking from knowing this; so that more ill may be done by the example, than good by telling the whole truth." Here was an instance of his varying from himself in talk; for when Lord Hailes and he sat one morning calmly conversing in my house at Edinburgh, I well remember that Dr. Johnson maintained, that "If a man is to write *A Panegyric*, he may keep vices out of sight: but if he professes to write *A Life*, he must represent it really as it was;" and when I objected to the danger of telling that Parnell drank to excess, he said, that "It would produce an instructive caution to avoid drinking, when it was seen, that even the learning and genius of Parnell could be debased by it." And in the Hebrides he maintained, as appears from my "Journal," that a man's intimate friend should mention his faults, if he writes his life. (Boswell.)

Goldsmith, in his diverting simplicity, complained one day, in a mixed company, of Lord Camden. "I met him (said he) at Lord Clare's house in the country, and he took no more notice of me than if I had been an ordinary man." The company having laughed heartily, Johnson stood forth in defense of his friend. "Nay, Gentlemen, (said he,) Dr.

Goldsmith is in the right. A nobleman ought to have made up to such a man as Goldsmith; and I think it is much against Lord Camden that he neglected him." (Boswell.)

Boswell. "I drank chocolate, Sir, this morning with Mr. Eld; and, to my no small surprise, found him to be a *Staffordshire Whig*, a being which I did not believe had existed. Johnson. "Sir, there are rascals in all countries." (Boswell.)

Johnson used to say that he made it a constant rule to talk as well as he could, both as to sentiment and expression; by which means, what had been originally effort became familiar and easy. The consequence of this, Sir Joshua observed, was, that his common conversation in all companies was such as to secure him universal attention, as something above the usual colloquial style was expected. (Boswell.)

Sir Joshua Reynolds having said that he took the altitude of a man's taste by his stories and his wit, and of his understanding by the remarks which he repeated; being always sure that he must be a weak man, who quotes common things with an emphasis as if they were oracles; — Johnson agreed with him; and Sir Joshua having also observed that the real character of a man was found out by his amusements, — Johnson added, "Yes, Sir; no man is a hypocrite in his pleasures." (Boswell.)

I started a thought this afternoon which amused us a great part of the way. "If," said I, "our Club should come and set up in St. Andrews, as a college, to teach all that each of us can in the several departments of learning and taste, we should rebuild the city: we should draw a wonderful concourse of students." Dr. Johnson entered fully into the spirit of this project. We immediately fell to distributing the officers. I was to teach civil and Scotch law; Burke, politics and eloquence; Garrick, the art of public speaking; Langton was to be our Grecian, Colman our Latin professor; Nugent to teach physic; Lord Charlemont, modern history; Beauclerk, natural philosophy; Vesey, Irish antiquities, or Celtic learning; Jones, Oriental learning; Goldsmith, poetry and ancient history; Chamier, commercial politics; Rey-

nolds, painting, and the arts which have beauty for their object; Chambers, the law of England. Dr. Johnson at first said, "I'll trust theology to nobody but myself." But, upon due consideration, that Percy is a clergyman, it was agreed that Percy should teach practical divinity and British antiquities; Dr. Johnson himself, logic, metaphysics, and scholastic divinity. In this manner did we amuse ourselves, each suggesting, and each varying or adding, till the whole was adjusted. Dr. Johnson said, we only wanted a mathematician since Dyer died, who was a very good one; but as to everything else, we should have a very capital university. (Boswell.)

"Why, Sir, if you are to have but one book with you upon a journey, let it be a book of science. When you have read through a book of entertainment, you know it, and it can do no more for you; but a book of science is inexhaustible." (Boswell.)

Talking of biography, he said, he did not think that the life of any literary man in England had been well written. Besides the common incidents of life, it should tell us his studies, his mode of living, the means by which he attained to excellence, and his opinion of his own works. (Boswell.)

I am happy, however, to mention a pleasing instance of his enduring with great gentleness to hear one of his most striking particularities pointed out: Miss Hunter, a niece of his friend, Christopher Smart, when a very young girl, struck by his extraordinary motions, said to him, "Pray, Dr. Johnson, why do you make such strange gestures?" "From bad habit," he replied: "do you, my dear, take care to guard against bad habits." This was told by the young lady's brother at Margate. (Boswell.)

Books that you may carry to the fire and hold readily in your hand are the most useful after all. (Hawkins.)

I am very fond of the company of ladies. I like their beauty, I like their delicacy, I like their vivacity, and I like their silence. (Seward.)

The advice that is wanted is commonly unwelcome, and that which is not wanted is evidently impertinent. (Piozzi *Letters*.)

Allow children to be happy their own way, for what better way will they ever find? (Piozzi *Letters*.)

"There are," said Dr. Johnson, "three distinct kinds of judges upon all new authors or productions. The first are those who know no rules, but pronounce entirely from their natural tastes and feelings; the second are those who know and judge by rules; and the third are those who know, but are above the rules. These last are those you should wish to satisfy. Next to them rate the natural judges; but ever despise the opinions that are formed by the rules." (Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*.)

Mr. Crauford being engaged to dinner where Dr. Johnson was to be, resolved to pay his court to him; and having heard that he preferred Donne's *Satires* to Pope's version of them said, "Do you know, Dr. Johnson, that I like Dr. Donne's original *Satires* better than Pope's?" Johnson said, "Well, sir, I can't help that." (Murray's *Johnsoniana*.)

It was near the close of Johnson's life that two young ladies, who were warm admirers of his works but had never seen him, went to Bolt's Court and asking if he was at home, were shown upstairs where he was writing. He laid down his pen on their entrance; and, as they stood before him, one of the females repeated a speech of some length previously prepared for the occasion. It was an enthusiastic effusion, and when the speaker had finished, she panted for a reply. What was her mortification when all he said was, "Fiddle-de-dee, my dear." (Murray's *Johnsoniana*.)

In answer to the arguments urged by Puritans, Quakers, etc., against showy decorations of the human figure, I once heard him exclaim: "Oh, let us not be found, when our Master calls us, ripping the lace off our waistcoats, but the spirit of contention from our souls and tongues! . . . Alas! sir, a man who cannot get to heaven in a green coat will not find his way thither the sooner in a gray one." (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.)

I made one day very minute inquiries about the tale of his knocking down Tom Osborne the bookseller. "And how was that affair? in earnest? do tell me, Mr. Johnson." "There

is nothing to tell, dearest lady, but that he was insolent and I beat him, and that he was a blockhead and told of it, which I should never have done. I have beat many a fellow, but the rest had the wit to hold their tongues." (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.)

The size of a man's understanding may always be justly measured by his mirth. (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.)

I asked Mr. Johnson if he ever disputed with his wife. "Perpetually," said he; "my wife had a particular reverence for cleanliness, and desired the praise of neatness in her dress and furniture, as many ladies do, till they become troublesome to their best friends, slaves to their own besoms, and only sigh for the hour of sweeping their husbands out of the house as dirt and useless lumber. A clean floor is so comfortable, she would say sometimes by way of twitting; till at last I told her that I thought we had had talk enough about the floor, we would now have a touch at the ceiling." I asked him if he ever huffed his wife about his dinner. "So often," he replied, "that at last she called to me and said, 'Nay, hold, Mr. Johnson, and do not make a farce of thanking God for a dinner which in a few minutes you will protest not eatable.' " (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.)

We talked of Lady Tavistock, who grieved herself to death for the loss of her husband. "She was rich and without employment," said Johnson, "so she cried till she lost all power of restraining her tears: other women are forced to outlive their husbands, who were just as much beloved, depend on it; but they have no time for grief; and I doubt not, if we had put Lady Tavistock into a small chandler's shop, and given her a nurse-child to tend, her life would have been saved. The poor and the busy have no leisure for sentimental sorrow." (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.)

Mrs. Brooke asked Johnson to look over her *Siege of Sinope*; he always found means to evade it. At last she pressed him so closely that he refused to do it, and told her that she herself, by carefully looking it over, would be able to see if there was anything amiss as well as he could. "But, sir," said she, "I have no time. I have already too many irons in the fire." "Why, then, madam," said he, quite out

of patience, "the best thing I can advise you to do is to put your tragedy along with your irons." (Hannah More's *Memoirs*.)

"A story," said Johnson, "is a specimen of human manners and derives its sole value from its truth. When Foote has told me something, I dismiss it from my mind like a passing shadow; when Reynolds tells me something, I consider myself as possessed of an idea the more." (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.)

Every man has some time in his life an ambition to be a wag. (Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*, quoting Johnson.)

A large party had been invited to meet the doctor at Stow Hill. The dinner waited far beyond the usual hour, and the company were about to sit down, when Johnson appeared at the great gate. He stood for some time in deep contemplation, and at length began to climb it; and, having succeeded in clearing it, advanced with hasty strides towards the house. On his arrival Mrs. Gastrel asked him if he had forgotten there was a small gate for foot-passengers by the side of the carriage-entrance? "No, my dear lady, by no means," replied the doctor; "but I had a mind to try whether I could climb a gate now as I used to do when I was a lad." (Parker.)

No man was ever more zealously attached to his party: he not only loved a Tory himself, but he loved a man the better if he hated a Whig. "Dear Bathurst," said he to me one day, "was a man to my very heart's content: he hated a fool, and he hated a rogue, and he hated a Whig — he was a very good hater." (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.)

Mr. Thrale loved prospects, and was mortified that his friend could not enjoy the sight of those different dispositions of wood and water, hill and valley, that traveling through England and France affords a man. But when he wished to point them out to his companion, "Never heed such nonsense," would be the reply; "a blade of grass is always a blade of grass, whether in one country or another. Let us, if we *do* talk, talk about something. Men and women are my subjects of inquiry; let us see how these differ from those we have left behind." (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.)

One of Dr. Johnson's rudest speeches was to a pompous gentleman coming out of Lichfield Cathedral, who said, "Dr. Johnson, we have had a most excellent discourse to-day." "That may be," said Johnson, "but it is impossible that you should know it." (Cradock.)

A young fellow, very confident in his abilities, lamented one day that he had lost all his Greek. "I believe it happened at the same time, sir," said Johnson, "that I lost all my large estate in Yorkshire." (Piozzi's *Anecdotes*.)

Mrs. Thrale complained that she was quite worn out with that tiresome silly woman who had talked of her family and affairs till she was sick to death of hearing her. "Madam," said he, "why do you blame the woman for the only sensible thing she could do — talking of her family and her affairs? For how should a woman who is as empty as a drum talk upon any other subject? If you speak to her of the sun, she does not know that it rises in the east. If you speak to her of the moon, she does not know it changes at the full. If you speak to her of the queen, she does not know she is the king's wife. How, then, can you blame her for talking of her family and affairs?" (Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*.)

Mrs. Digby was present at the introduction of Dr. Johnson at one of the late Mrs. Montagu's literary parties, when she herself, with several still younger ladies, almost immediately surrounded our Colossus of literature (an odd figure, sure enough) with more wonder than politeness; and while contemplating him as if he had been some monster from the deserts of Africa, Johnson said to them, "Ladies, I am tame; you may stroke me!" (B. N. Turner.)

When Mrs. Siddons¹ came into the room, there happened to be no chair ready for her. Observing this, he said, with a smile, "Madam, you who so often occasion a want of seats to other people will the more easily excuse the want of one yourself." (J. P. Kemble, reported in Boswell.)

I must here mention an incident which shows how ready Johnson was to make amends for any little incivility. When I called upon him the morning after he had pressed me rather

¹ The famous actress.

roughly to read louder, he said, "I was peevish yesterday; you must forgive me. When you are as old and as sick as I am, perhaps you may be peevish too." I have heard him make many apologies of this kind. (Hoole.)

Garrick was followed to the Abbey by a long extended train of friends, illustrious for their rank and genius. I saw old Samuel Johnson standing beside his grave, at the foot of Shakespeare's monument, and bathed in tears. (Richard Cumberland.)

I shall never forget the impression I felt in Dr. Johnson's favor the very first time I was in his company, on his saying that, as he returned to his lodgings, at one or two o'clock in the morning, he often saw poor children asleep on thresholds and stalls, and that he used to put pennies into their hands to buy them a breakfast. (Miss Reynolds.)

NOTES

8. Minutely Critical. "His blindness is as much the effect of absence [of mind] as of infirmity, for he sees wonderfully at times. He can see the color of a lady's top-knot, for he very often finds fault with it." — Madame D'Arblay's *Diary*, ii, 174. (Hill, i, 48.)

9. Carte. Thomas Carte (1686–1754) proposed to write a history of England from original sources, but never proceeded further than the reign of John. He cited an instance of the cure of scrofula by the royal touch. (Hill, i, 49.)

9. Queen Anne. Macaulay (*History of England*, xiv) says that Charles II, in the course of his reign, touched nearly a thousand persons. The expense of the ceremony was little less than ten thousand pounds a year. On March 30, 1712, two hundred persons were touched by Queen Anne. (Hill, i, 50.)

9. Francesco Petrarch (1304–1374). An Italian scholar and poet, whose researches helped to bring on the Renaissance. Dr. Johnson read not Petrarch's Italian poems, but his learned works in Latin.

9. Anacreon. A Greek poet of the fifth century B.C. His verse was mostly of a light character.

9. Hesiod. A Greek poet, probably contemporary with Homer. He wrote didactic works, chief among which is the *Works and Days*.

10. Nineteenth year Dr. Hill has pointed out that this should be his "twentieth year."

11. Robert Burton (1577–1640). "A melancholy and humorous person," author of the *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Lamb called him "that fantastic great old man."

11. Macrobius. A Latin grammarian and statesman of the fourth century, who was hostile to Christianity.

11. Relieved. Johnson once told Hawkins that he knew not what it was to be totally free from pain. (Cf. Hill, i, 74.)

12. Insanity. "Of the uncertainties of our present state, the most dreadful and alarming is the uncertain continuance of reason." — *Rasselas*, Chap. 43. (Hill, i, 77.)

12. Horace (65–8 B.C.). The pleasantest of Latin poets, author of lyrics, epistles in verse, an essay on poetry, satires, etc.

12. Euripides (480–406 B.C.). The most modern in spirit of the great Athenian tragic poets.

12. Epigram (Greek). The *Greek Anthology* contains a collection of epigrams — brief, pithy poems not necessarily witty.

13. Richard Bentley (1662–1742). One of the greatest of English classical scholars.

13. Samuel Clarke (1675–1729). A writer on theology.

13. From beginning to end. According to Mrs. Piozzi, Johnson asked: "Was there ever yet anything written by mere man that was

wished longer by its readers excepting *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *The Pilgrim's Progress*?" (Cf. Hill, i, 82.)

13. With rapid exertion. He told Dr. Burney, says Malone, that he never wrote any of his works that were printed twice over. Dr. Burney's wonder at seeing several pages of his *Lives of the Poets* in manuscript, with scarce a blot or erasure, drew this observation from him.

15. The newspaper. The *Birmingham Journal*.

16. He wore his hair. That is, he did not wear a wig at this time.

16. Mrs. Porter. Born Feb. 4, 1689, married to Johnson, July 9, 1735. She brought her second husband about seven or eight hundred pounds, it is believed. (Cf. Hill, i, 111.)

18. Usher of a school. For a brief period, Johnson had acted as usher in the school of Market-Bosworth, in Leicestershire. Boswell describes this episode of Johnson's life in a passage omitted in the text.

18. Described her. Mrs. Piozzi remarks: "The picture I found of her at Lichfield was very pretty, and her daughter said it was very like. Mr. Johnson has told me that her hair was eminently beautiful, quite *blonde* like that of a baby." (*Anecdotes*, 148.)

19. Not particularly known. One curious anecdote was communicated by himself to Mr. John Nichols. Mr. Wilcox, the bookseller, on being informed by him that his intention was to get his livelihood as an author, eyed his robust frame attentively, and with a significant look said, "You had better buy a porter's knot." He however added, "Wilcox was one of my best friends." — Boswell.

21. Assurance of the man. "To give the world assurance of a man." *Hamlet*, iii. 4.62.

21. Juvenal (55?-125?). A vitriolic Roman satirist.

22. He might dislike. Dr. Hill notes that Boswell misread the letter. Johnson was to make any necessary alterations, not the printer.

22. Alexander Pope (1688-1744). The greatest poet of the eighteenth century, and yet, in modern opinion, not a poet at all, but merely a writer of remarkably good verse. Pope is the interpreter of the town, of human nature, and of the upper classes in society. Johnson cherished a very high opinion of Pope. He said that the question "Was Pope a poet?" was to be answered only by asking "If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?"

22. Mr. Richardson, son of the painter, Jonathan Richardson. The latter wrote several works on painting. His son, also Jonathan, published with his father *Explanatory Notes on Paradise Lost*. (Cf. Hill, i, 149.)

22. Marmor Norfolciense. A pamphlet, published anonymously, of "warm anti-Hanoverian zeal."

23. "Paper-sparing Pope." "Pope's frugality," says Johnson in his *Life of Pope*, "sometimes appeared in petty artifices of parsimony, such as the practice of writing his compositions on the back

of letters, as may be seen in the remaining copy of the *Iliad*, by which perhaps in five years five shillings were saved." But he excuses Pope in part because of his determination "not to be in want."

25. Richard Savage (1697-1743). An unfortunate man and a poor poet. Savage engaged in a famous lawsuit to prove his right to a title, but unsuccessfully, and he died in poverty and obscurity. Johnson's *Life* has preserved him from oblivion. Savage provided Pope with information for his *Dunciad* and received pay for this. His own writings are valueless, according to modern opinion. Johnson's friendship for him, however, found his works "the productions of a genius truly poetical," and he discovered in them "an original air, which has no resemblance of any foregoing writer."

25. Melancholy to reflect. According to Walter Harte, author of a *Life of Gustavus Adolphus*, who communicated the information to Boswell, through Richard Stowe of Bedfordshire, Johnson's indigence was extreme indeed at this time. Shortly after *The Life of Savage* was published, Harte dined with Edward Cave, and praised the book. Soon after Cave met him and said: "You made a man happy t'other day." "How could that be?" asked Harte; "nobody was there but ourselves." Cave answered by reminding him that a plate of victuals had been sent behind a screen. This had gone to Johnson, who was dressed so shabbily that he did not choose to appear. But he heard the conversation, and was highly delighted with the encomiums on his book.

27. Distressed Mother. A play by Ambrose Philips. Johnson said of Philips that in some of his poems "he cannot be denied the praise of lines sometimes elegant, but he has seldom much force or much comprehension."

30. Junius and Skinner's Dictionary. Francis Junius (1589-1677) and Stephen Skinner (1623-1667) were among the first to study the Teutonic languages. Their etymological dictionaries greatly assisted Johnson.

32. Dr. Richard Bathurst. Johnson once referred to Bathurst as "my dear, dear Bathurst, whom I loved better than ever I loved any human creature." (Piozzi, *Anecdotes*, 18.)

32. John Hawkins, an attorney. Boswell appended this note concerning Hawkins, whom he heartily disliked, as a rival to the favor of Johnson and author of his authorized biography: "He was afterwards for several years Chairman of the Middlesex Justices, and upon occasion of presenting an address to the King, accepted the usual offer of Knighthood. He is author of *A History of Music*, in five quarto volumes. By assiduous attention upon Johnson in his last illness, he obtained the office of one of his executors; in consequence of which the booksellers of London employed him to publish an edition of Dr. Johnson's works, and to write his life."

34. The nine years of Horace. Horace, the Latin poet, advised in his essay on poetry that an author polish and revise a work nine years before publishing it.

34. Strangled upon the stage. The strangling of Irene in view of the audience was suggested by Garrick.

35. Robert Dodsley (1703-1764). His *Collection of Old Plays* (1744) did much to revive interest in Shakespeare's contemporaries.

35. The Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian. Three periodicals conducted by Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison. In the second appeared the famous character, Sir Roger de Coverley. These essays are the forerunners of the modern English novel.

36. "A man may write at any time." Johnson wrote concerning the poet Gray: "Gray had a notion not very peculiar, that he could not write but at certain times, or at happy moments; a fantastic foppery, to which my kindness for a man of learning and virtue wishes him to have been superior." *Works*, viii, 482.

36. Samuel Richardson (1689-1761). Richardson was a shy and highly respectable printer who at the age of fifty began a new era with the publication of his novel, *Pamela*. His two other stories, *Clarissa Harlowe* and *Sir Charles Grandison*, are the first masterpieces of the modern analytic novel. Johnson esteemed him highly.

36. Without even being read over. Nevertheless, when Johnson revised the *Rambler* essays for the collected edition, he made more than 6000 alterations.

39. Joseph Addison (1672-1719). Part author of the *Tatler* and *Spectator* papers. Addison is regarded as one of the chief founders of modern English prose, the modern newspaper, and the modern English novel. "There is in most of his compositions," says Johnson, "a calmness and equability, deliberate and cautious, sometimes with little that delights, but seldom with anything that offends." And again he remarks that "as a describer of life and manners, he must be allowed to stand perhaps the first of the first rank." Macaulay's *Essay on Addison*, which should be consulted, is written in a tone of the highest enthusiasm. See also Franklin's remarks on Addison in his *Autobiography*.

39. 17th of March, O. S. Previous to 1753, the year began not with January 1st, but with March 25th. Moreover, the calendar had gradually fallen behind true chronology eleven days. On Sept. 3, 1752, these eleven days were canceled, and the following day was called Sept. 15th. The old calendar is referred to as O[ld] S[tyle].

39. "A lesson he had learned by rote." A quotation from Sir John Hawkins's biography of Johnson.

40. Reynolds. Sir Joshua Reynolds said of Johnson: "For my own part, I acknowledge the highest obligations to him. He may be said to have formed my mind, and to have brushed from it a great deal of rubbish." It was said of Reynolds, to show how little he crouched to the great, of whom he painted so many, that he never gave them their proper titles, avoiding the use of the terms, "your lordship" and "your ladyship;" nor did he ever say "Sir" in speaking to anyone but Dr. Johnson. (Cf. Hill, i, 285.) In Boswell's *Journal* of the Hebrides tour, Johnson says: "Sir Joshua

Reynolds, Sir, is the most invulnerable man I know; the man with whom if you should quarrel, you would find the most difficulty how to abuse."

41. Rochefoucault. François, duc de la Rochefoucault (1613-1680), was a French writer, author of *Maxims* that constitute a satirical comment on men's foibles. One of his most famous sayings is this: "Ingratitude is simply the spirit of independence." Another is: "Hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue."

41. A grant of free warren. A franchise to keep in an enclosure certain wild animals for hunting purposes.

41. Topham Beauclerk. Beauclerk was the great-grandson of Charles II and Nell Gwynne. He was born in December, 1739.

42. That liquor called Bishop. A beverage containing port wine, oranges or lemons, and sugar.

42. "Short, O short." An imperfect quotation from Lansdowne's *Drinking Song to Sleep*.

43. Lord Chesterfield. Chesterfield (1694-1773) had many claims to eminence, although he is now chiefly remembered in connection with Johnson. He was a brilliant orator — his parliamentary career covering forty years — and a noted wit. He proved an excellent Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1745-46 and Secretary of State from 1746-48. His *Letters to His Son* (1774) are of an extreme elegance and distinction. They were composed as a guide to the lad in principles, in deportment, and in sentiment. These *Letters* had a great success and are still a kind of classic. The politeness of Chesterfield was proverbial — his last recorded words while dying were, "Give Dayrolies a chair." But apparently he was not polite to Johnson. Perhaps a servant was at fault. At any rate, Chesterfield became the occasion for ending an old era in literature — the era of patronage — and opening a new era — the era of the public.

43. Colley Cibber (1671-1757). An English dramatist and poet laureate (1730-1757). His account of his own life is considered his best work, but some of his comedies possess considerable merit. He was the chief figure in the second version of *The Dunciad* of Pope, with whom he carried on an animated controversy for some years.

44. "All was false and hollow." *Paradise Lost*, ii, 112.

44. To give it me. Dr. Johnson appeared to have had a remarkable delicacy with respect to the circulation of this letter; for Dr. Douglas, Bishop of Salisbury, informs me that, having many years ago pressed him to be allowed to read it to the second Lord Hardwicke, who was very desirous to hear it (promising at the same time that no copy of it should be taken), Johnson seemed much pleased that it had attracted the attention of a nobleman of such a respectable character; but after pausing some time, declined to comply with the request, saying, with a smile, "No, Sir. I have hurt the dog too much already;" or words to that purpose. — Boswell.

45. Virgil (70-19 B.C.). A Roman epic poet, author of *The Æneid*, a continuation of Homer's *Iliad*. Virgil's style is accounted

the most felicitous in Latin literature. Dryden said of him that he "is everywhere elegant, sweet, and flowing in his hexameters." George Edward Woodberry sums up his achievement in these words: "He, more than any other poet, has been a part of the intellectual life of Europe alike by length of sway and by the multitude of minds he has touched in all generations; and, among the Latin races, he is still the climax of their genius, for charm and dignity, for art and the profound substance of his matter, and for its serious inclusiveness of human life." Tennyson, in his magnificent poem, *To Virgil*, calls him "lord of language," and speaks of "All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a lonely word" in Virgil's poems.

48. A few of his definitions must be admitted to be erroneous. In addition to defining certain words incorrectly, Johnson indulged his prejudices or his sense of humor in the case of other words. For example, he defined *excise* "a tax levied on commodities, and adjudged not by the common judges of property, but by wretches hired by those to whom excise is paid." *Oats* he defined: "A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people." A *lexicographer* he defined: "A writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge." *Network* he defined: "Anything reticulated or decussated, at equal distances, with interstices between the intersections."

49. Grub-street. Johnson told Fanny Burney that he had never visited this London street.

52. Thomas Warton. Warton (1728-1790) was a clergyman, poet laureate from 1785 to the time of his death, and author of a *History of English Poetry*. He was a lover of old poetry, and together with Dr. Thomas Percy did much to revive it in favor. He and his brother, Joseph Warton, formed part of the Johnson circle.

53. Contemplation of mortality. A quotation from Sir John Hawkins's biography of Johnson.

58. John Wilkes (1727-1797). An English politician and agitator, one of the earliest representatives of the "popular rights" party. He engaged in many violent altercations with the Tory faction, particularly in the columns of his periodical, *The North Briton*. He was imprisoned for writing an article attacking George III, but the law of the liberty of the press having been invoked, he was freed, much to the general delight.

58. Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), author of *Roderick Random*, *Peregrine Pickle*, *Humphrey Clinker*, etc., novels of comic adventure, full of violence, coarse humor, and horse-play. He had considerable influence on later writers like Scott, Charles Reade, Charles Lever, and Dickens.

58. That great Cham of literature. *Cham* is a variation of *Khan* — a Tartar ruler. *Cham* is now no longer used except in connection with Johnson.

60. The Earl of Bute (1713-1792). John Stuart, the Earl of Bute, was prime minister of England from May, 1762, to April, 1763. He was extremely unpopular.

60. Pension and pensioners. Johnson in his *Dictionary* had defined *pension* as "an allowance made to anyone without an equivalent. In England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country." *Pensioner* is referred to as "a dependent."

64. Thomas Sheridan. Father of the famous dramatist and orator, Richard Brinsley Sheridan. He was a teacher of elocution in London.

68. *The Elements of Criticism*. By Lord Kames (1696–1782).

69. James Macpherson (1736–1796) claimed to have discovered a cycle of poems written by Ossian, a legendary Gaelic bard of the third century, and his supposed translation of these poems into rhythmical English prose (1760–1763) created a sensation, not only in Great Britain, but all over Europe. Johnson's view that Macpherson had forged his version has been sustained by investigation, although it is likely that Macpherson incorporated a few fragments of genuine Gaelic verse in his "translation." Wordsworth pointed out that the fact that "Ossian" produced no imitators in itself is a "decisive proof that the book is essentially unnatural; nor should I require any other to demonstrate it to be a forgery, audacious as worthless." Macpherson took advantage of appointments in Florida and India to amass a considerable fortune, and for sixteen years he was M. P. for Camelford, in Cornwall. By a curious irony of fate, he is buried within a few feet of Johnson, in Westminster Abbey.

69. Reverend Dr. Blair. Hugh Blair (1718–1800) was an extremely popular pulpit orator. In book form his sermons found "tens of thousands of admirers," says Gosse, who characterizes him as "once among the most prominent," but "now perhaps the most obsolete of English writers."

70. Christopher Smart (1722–1770). A writer of this time, undoubtedly mad, but author of one magnificent poem, the *Song to David*. About 1762 Johnson visited him in Bedlam and prayed with him. He had been a fellow of Pembroke College.

71. Grotius. Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) was a famous Dutch writer on religion and international law.

71. Dr. Pearson. John Pearson (1613–1686) was an English clergyman, author of *Exposition of the Creed*. For Clarke, see earlier note, page 255.

73. Birthday Odes. As poet laureate, it was Colley Cibber's duty to write verses in honor of the birthday anniversaries of members of the royal family, as well as for their marriages and deaths. This function of the office has always resulted in ridicule of the poet laureates. Not even Wordsworth or Tennyson could write much better poetry of this kind than poetasters like Whitehead or Pye.

73. Whitehead. William Whitehead (1715–1785) was Cibber's successor as poet laureate.

73. Gray. Thomas Gray is, of course, best known as the author of *An Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. Johnson constantly cherished an antipathy to Gray, and seemed totally unable to appreciate his fine sympathy with nature or his understanding of human suffering. He said of Gray, "He has a kind of strutting dignity, and is tall by walking on tiptoe." To only four stanzas of the *Elegy*, out of all Gray's poetry, did Johnson give unqualified approval. Yet of the *Elegy* Gosse has said that it "is the most characteristic single poem of the eighteenth century," and it is probably read with pleasure by more people who do not otherwise read poetry than any other poem in the language. Gray is described as "a little plump person, very shy, with a fund of latent humor; the tottering and gingerly way in which he walked was the subject of ridicule, and he was altogether too delicate for the rough age he lived in." Cowper thought Gray "the only poet since Shakespeare entitled to the character of *sublime*."

74. David Mallet (1700-1765). A Scotch poet who wrote *Alfred, A Masque*, in collaboration with James Thomson. *Rule, Britannia*, sung for the first time in this play, may have been written by Mallet.

75. "I can do it better myself." He went home with Mr. Burke to supper; and broke his shin by attempting to exhibit to the company how much better he could jump over a stick than the puppets. — Boswell.

80. Swift. Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was the bitterest satirist in English — perhaps in all literature. His *Gulliver's Travels* is read chiefly by children, who naturally miss its pitiless satire. Carlyle thought Swift the greatest man of his age, and Thackeray said that "thinking of him is like thinking of an empire falling." Swift's life was extremely unhappy, because his pride made him feel constantly that he never had the honor and the place that were his due. To most of his contemporaries he seemed violent and hard, but his private papers reveal him as at bottom tender and kind-hearted. Like Johnson, he lived in constant fear of insanity, but unlike him he died in that condition.

80. James Thomson (1700-1748). A Scotch poet, whose poem, *The Seasons*, "showed to Londoners the way to the fields." He also probably wrote the English national hymn, *Rule, Britannia*. Johnson said of him: "As a writer, he is entitled to one praise of the highest kind: his mode of thinking and of expressing his thoughts is original. . . . He thinks in a peculiar train, and he thinks always as a man of genius; he looks round on Nature and on life with the eye which Nature bestows only on a poet; the eye that distinguishes in everything presented to its view whatever there is on which imagination can delight to be detained, and with a mind that at once comprehends the vast and attends to the minute." Thomson did much to bring on the Romantic Movement in English poetry.

80. "Has not — a great deal of wit?" Apparently the allusion is to Burke, says Hill.

83. A very fashionable Baronet. My friend Sir Michael Le Fleming. This gentleman, with all his experience of sprightly and elegant life, inherits, with the beautiful family domain, no inconsiderable share of that love of literature, which distinguished his venerable grandfather, the Bishop of Carlisle. He one day observed to me, of Dr. Johnson, in a felicity of phrase, "There is a blunt dignity about him on every occasion." — Boswell.

85. Gulosity. Greediness.

87. Big words for little matters. Yet, as Croker pointed out, Johnson makes a young lady talk of "the cosmetic discipline," while a young gentleman tells us of "the flaccid sides of a foot-ball having swelled out into stiffness and extension."

88. Dr. Nugent. A physician, the father-in-law of Burke.

88. Mr. Chamier. A stockbroker early in life; later, simply a gentleman of leisure.

92. Doctor of Laws. In his *Journey to the Hebrides*, Johnson remarks: "It is reasonable to suppose . . . that he who is by age qualified to be a doctor has in so much time gained learning sufficient not to disgrace the title, or wit sufficient not to desire it." (Hill, i, 565.)

92. Mr. Thrale. In Murphy's *Johnson* (Hill, i, 571) it is said of Thrale: "A more ingenious mind no man possessed. His education at Oxford gave him the habits of a gentleman; his amiable temper recommended his conversation; and the goodness of his heart made him a sincere friend." Madame D'Arblay mentions a trait of Thrale's that perhaps explains his fondness for Johnson's society. "Though entirely a man of peace," she says, "and a gentleman in his character, he had a singular amusement in hearing, instigating, and provoking a war of words, alternating triumph and overthrow, between clever and ambitious colloquial combatants, where there was nothing that could inflict disgrace upon defeat." — *Memoirs of Dr. Burney*, ii, 104. (Hill, i, 572.)

93. Mrs. Thrale. Mrs. Thrale preserved very full, though not particularly accurate, records of the intercourse of her estimable husband with Johnson; since her death these have been published in part.

96. Voltaire (1694-1778). A French writer whose influence in his time was world-wide. He wrote novels, dramas, short stories, histories, epics, essays, and a "philosophical dictionary." He is an excellent representative of the French spirit of skeptical inquiry; he did much to make possible the widening freedom of thought in science and philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

96. Dryden. "Glorious John" Dryden (1631-1700) wrote plays, verses, and prose, besides making a number of translations. He helped create the modern paragraph and to establish sound literary criticism. His satires are unequalled in English. He is sometimes

called "the greatest man of a little age." Johnson said of him: "His compositions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials;" and, again, that he found English poetry brick and left it marble.

96. Burke. Burke entered Parliament, as member for Wendover Borough, in 1766.

98. His Majesty. George III is, of course, the monarch referred to.

100. Controversy between Warburton and Lowth. William Warburton (1698-1779), whom Johnson admired highly, was a very pugnacious theologian and critic. Robert Lowth (1710-1787) was an English divine and scholar.

101. Dr. Hill. Aaron Hill (1685-1750) was a minor English poet and dramatist, mentioned in Pope's *Dunciad*. According to D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature* (Hill, ii, 44), Hill once owned to a friend that he had overfatigued himself with writing seven works at once, one of which was on architecture and another on cookery. At one time Hill contracted to translate a Dutch work on insects for fifty guineas. As he was ignorant of the language, he bargained with another translator to do the work for twenty-five guineas. This man, who was equally ignorant, rebargained with a third, who perfectly understood his original, to make the version for twelve guineas.

102. Dr. Joseph Warton (1722-1800). Brother of the more famous Thomas Warton. He edited Pope, but in a critical spirit. Like his brother, he preferred a freer and wilder poetry than Pope represented.

103. The bear. It was said, in reference to the pensions granted to Dr. Johnson and a certain Dr. *Shebbeare*, that the king had pensioned a *he-bear* and a *she-bear*.

105. One of the company. Boswell himself, according to Northcote's *Biography of Reynolds*.

106. Zimri. A character in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. He is a brilliant satire on the Duke of Buckingham. Dryden describes him thus:

"A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome;
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon."

106. The Mourning Bride. A drama by William Congreve (1670-1729), the most brilliant of English writers of comedy previous to Sheridan. In this play occurs the famous line, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast."

106. Foote's. Samuel Foote (1720-1777) wrote farces and comedies and himself appeared in them. He was the favorite comic actor of the day.

106. Joseph Baretti. An Italian of fine culture, who came to London about 1753 and died there about 1789. He was employed as language master and as author, and was intimate with Dr. Johnson. In a street brawl in which he became engaged, he killed a man. Dr. Johnson and many others testified in court to his good character, and he was acquitted.

107. Dominicetti. A quack, who in 1765 established medicated baths in Cheney Walk, Chelsea. (Croker.)

107. David Hume (1711-1776). A Scotch historian and philosopher, who was opposed to the orthodox religious views of his age. His *History of Great Britain* was read with as much avidity as a novel, says Gosse, owing to the simplicity and elegance of his style, "which proceeds limpid, manly, and serene, without a trace of effort." But Hume's predilections for Tory ideas led him to do willful injustice to the opponents of arbitrary power, and his pages, in addition, "swarm with inaccuracies." Aside from his historical works, Hume is famous for his *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* and *An Enquiry Concerning Morals*, which gained him a European reputation. Hume was looked on with horror by the orthodox as a dangerous infidel; but in truth he was, it is believed, exactly what he merrily described himself as being — "a sober, discreet, virtuous, regular, quiet, good-natured man of a bad reputation." Boswell once said to him: "How much better are you than your books!"

109. Ranelagh. A public hall and garden, in Chelsea, London, famous as a gay resort of fashion, from 1742 to the eighteenth century. In Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*, it is described as follows:

"What are the amusements of Ranelagh? One half of the company are following one another in an eternal circle; like so many blind asses in an olive-mill, where they can neither discourse, distinguish, nor be distinguished; while the other half are drinking hot water, under the denomination of tea, till nine or ten o'clock at night, to keep them awake for the rest of the evening. As for the orchestra, the vocal music especially, it is well for the performers that they cannot be heard distinctly."

111. Fielding. Henry Fielding (1707-1754), although he wrote innumerable plays and several novels, is chiefly remembered by his *Tom Jones*. He was called by Byron "the prose Homer of human nature." Johnson constantly preferred his rival Richardson to Fielding, and disparaged the latter (except his novel *Amelia*) on many occasions. Gosse says of Fielding: "He has his eye always on conduct; he is keen to observe not what a man pretends or protests, but what he does, and this he records for us, sometimes with scant respect for our susceptibilities. But it has been a magnificent advantage for English fiction to have near the head of it a writer so vigorous, so virile, so devoid of every species of affectation and hypocrisy. In all the best of our later novelists there has been visible a strain of sincere manliness which comes down to them in

direct descent from Fielding, and which it would be a thousand pities for English fiction to relinquish." Coleridge, in his *Table Talk*, compared Fielding with Johnson's favorite, Richardson, as follows: "How charming, how wholesome Fielding is! To take him up after Richardson is like emerging from a sick-room, heated by stoves, into an open lawn, on a breezy day in May."

113. General Oglethorpe. James Edward Oglethorpe (1696-1785) was a British general of fine character, who planted the colony of Georgia and named it after George II. This colony was at first a place of settlement for criminals and refugees.

113. Belgrade. Belgrade was taken by Prince Eugene in 1717, after he had defeated the Turks at Wisnetza.

114. "Perfect through suffering." *Hebrews*, ii. 10.

114. Books were treated by Johnson. Beauclerk wrote to Lord Charlemont in 1773: "If you do not come over here, I will bring all the Club over to Ireland to live with you, and that will drive you here in your own defence. Johnson shall spoil your books, Goldsmith pull your flowers, and Boswell talk to you: stay then if you can." (Hill, ii, 192.)

116. Dr. Goldsmith has a new comedy in rehearsal. *She Stoops to Conquer*.

117. Action. Gesticulation.

117. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) was a French writer and philosopher who pointed out the inequalities men suffered in modern civilization, and advocated "a return to nature." Rousseau's views undoubtedly helped bring on the French Revolution. Boswell visited him while touring the Continent, and imbibed some of his views. Hazlitt called Rousseau "the father of sentiment."

120. Lucius Florus or Eutropius. Florus wrote an abridgment of Roman history. He lived in the second century of our era. Flavius Eutropius was a popular Latin historian of the fourth century.

121. That I was chosen. On the Hebrides tour, Johnson told Boswell several of the members wished to keep him out. "Burke told me," he said, "he doubted if you were fit for it; but now you are in, none of them are sorry. Burke says, that you have so much good humor naturally, it is scarce a virtue." Boswell. "They were afraid of you, Sir, as it was you who proposed me." Johnson. "Sir, they knew that if they refused you, they'd probably never have got in another. I'd have kept them all out. Beauclerk was very earnest for you." Boswell. "Beauclerk has a keenness of mind which is very uncommon."

124. James Beattie (1735-1803). A Scotch poet and philosopher, author of a romantic poem, *The Minstrel*.

125. He was respectfully entertained. Johnson wrote to Mrs. Thrale, Nov. 3, 1773: "He has better faculties than I imagined, more justness of discernment and more fecundity of images. It is very convenient to travel with him; for there is no house where he is not received with kindness and respect."

126. Sir A.'s letter. Sir Alexander Gordon, one of the professors at Aberdeen.

126. Quicken Dr. Webster. The Rev. Dr. Alexander Webster, an Edinburgh minister, had promised Johnson information concerning the highlands and islands of Scotland.

127. Macpherson is very furious. See earlier note on Macpherson, page 261. Johnson in his book had spoken with great severity regarding Macpherson and his claims that Ossian was authentic.

127. Lord Hailes. Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes (1726-1792), was a Scotch lawyer and antiquary.

127. Strong liquor. "It should be recollected," notes Boswell, "that this fanciful description of his friend was given by Johnson soon after he himself had become a water-drinker."

129. Since your Homer. Macpherson had recently published an unimpressive translation of Homer.

131. A race of convicts. It had long been the custom to deport convicts for settlement in America. Later, the same practice was followed with regard to Australia.

133. His mode of speaking was very impressive. My noble friend Lord Pembroke said once to me at Wilton, with a happy pleasantry and some truth, that "Dr. Johnson's sayings would not appear so extraordinary, were it not for his *bow-wow-way*." The sayings themselves are generally of sterling merit; but, doubtless, his *manner* was an addition to their effect; and therefore should be attended to as much as may be. It is necessary, however, to guard those who are not acquainted with him, against overcharged imitations or caricatures of his manner, which are frequently attempted, and many of which are second-hand copies from the late Mr. Henderson the actor, who, though a good mimic of some persons, did not represent Johnson correctly. — Boswell.

136. Nicolaida. A learned Greek.

137. The decision relating to Sir Allan. A lawsuit in which Johnson had interested himself.

139. Madame de Boufflers. A fashionable Frenchwoman, whose salon in Paris attracted many men of note, especially English writers, of whom she was very fond. She visited England in 1763.

140. Hermippus redivivus. Hermippus was the name of an Athenian satiric poet of the fifth century B.C.; also of a Greek philosopher of the third century B.C. *Hermippus redivivus* is the title of a book by Dr. John Campbell, said by Johnson to be "a curious history of the extravagances of the human mind."

143. The Beaux' Stratagem. A celebrated play by George Farquhar. The title of Boniface, landlord of the inn in this drama, whose pet expression, "as the saying is," is lugged into almost every sentence, has since become a stock name for an inn-keeper.

143. "Oats, the food of horses." See Johnson's definition, page 260. Johnson acknowledged to Boswell, while on the Hebrides

tour, that as a boy he had been very fond of eating raw oats. Lord Elibank made a happy retort on Dr. Johnson's definition of oats as food for men in Scotland, for horses in England: "Yes," said he, "and where else will you see *such horses* and *such men*?"

144. Jack Ellis. This Mr. Ellis was, I believe, the last of that profession called *Scriveners*, which is one of the London companies, but of which the business is no longer carried on separately, but is transacted by attorneys and others. He was a man of literature and talents. He was the author of a Hudibrastic version of Maphæus's *Canto*, in addition to the *Æneid*; of some poems in Dodsley's collection; and various other small pieces; but, being a very modest man, never put his name to anything. He showed me a translation which he had made of Ovid's *Epistles*, very prettily done. There is a good engraved portrait of him by Pether, from a picture by Fry, which hangs in the hall of the Scriveners' Company. I visited him October 4, 1790, in his ninety-third year, and found his judgment distinct and clear, and his memory, though faded so as to fail him occasionally, yet, as he assured me, and I indeed perceived, able to serve him very well, after a little recollection. It was agreeable to observe, that he was free from the discontent and fretfulness which too often molest old age. He in the summer of that year walked to Rotherhithe, where he dined, and walked home in the evening. He died on the 31st of December, 1791. — Boswell.

144. The most widely different. Hill quotes Madame D'Arblay's remark: "Dr. Johnson almost always prefers the company of an intelligent man of the world to that of a scholar."

145. The Lusiad. The great epic of discovery and exploration by the Portuguese poet Luis de Camoens (1524–1580), of which Vasca da Gama is the hero. It describes his journey to India in 1497 and his rounding of the Cape of Good Hope. The poem is sometimes called *The Epic of Commerce*.

146. Copy. The printer's term for manuscript.

147. John Wilkes, Esq. See earlier note, page 260. Johnson, according to Hill, called Wilkes "a retailer of sedition and obscenity" in his *The False Alarm*, and in *The North Briton* Wilkes, quoting Johnson's definition of a pensioner, called him "a slave of state, hired by a stipend to obey his master."

147. Sir John Pringle. An English army and court surgeon (1707–1782), very friendly with Boswell and his father and very obnoxious to Johnson.

148. Jack Ketch. A proverbial expression for the hangman.

150. Indifferent in his choice. Cf. "Indifferent in his choice to sleep or die." — Addison's *Cato*, v, 1. (Hill, iii, 68.)

150. Gretna-Green. A village in Scotland near the English border, formerly the scene of many runaway marriages.

151. Foote. Foote told me, that Johnson said of him, "For loud, obstreperous, broad-faced mirth, I know not his equal." — Boswell. See note on page 264.

152. He will play *Scrub* all his life. A character in Farquhar's *Beaux' Stratagem*. He says in Act iii: "Of a Monday I drive the coach, of a Tuesday I drive the plough, on Wednesday I follow the hounds, a Thursday I dun the tenants, on Friday I go to market, on Saturday I draw warrants, and a Sunday I draw beer." (Hill, iii, 80.)

153. Pindar (522-433 B.C.). One of the great lyric poets of Greece; chiefly noted for his odes celebrating victors in athletic contests. He was called by the ancient Latin critic Quintilian "by far the chief of all the lyrists." He is very hard to read in the original Greek, and appears very unfavorably in translation. Murray (*A History of Ancient Greek Literature*) says: "He was a poet and nothing else. He thought in music; he loved to live among great and beautiful images — Heracles, Achilles, Perseus, Iason, the daughters of Cadmus. When any part of his beloved saga repelled his moral sensitiveness, he glided away from it, careful not to express skepticism, careful also not to speak evil of a god. He loved poetry and music, especially his own. As a matter of fact, there was no poetry in the world like his, and when other people sang they jarred on him, he confesses, 'like crows.'"

153. Elkanah Settle (1648-1724). Settle, a fluent dramatist, was a rival of Dryden, who ridicules him as Doeg in *Absalom and Achitophel*. Gosse says of him: "He is the most amusing specimen of the poetaster, pure and simple, that English literature supplies us with." At the end of his life Settle wagged a serpent-tail in a Smith-field puppet-show, as a monster in a green leather suit of his own invention. He died in abject poverty.

155. Mr. Home's *Douglas*. John Home, a Scotch clergyman (1722-1808), made a sensation in London with his play *Douglas*. Johnson once defied Thomas Sheridan to show ten good lines in *Douglas*. Nevertheless, it held the stage for a number of years. In this play occurs the famous passage — still used as a "recitation" — that begins:

"My name is Norval; on the Grampian hills
My father feeds his flocks."

158. Less attention to profit. Was Johnson, then, quite sincere when he remarked that no one but a blockhead ever wrote except for money?

160. Watts. Dr. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), an English divine who wrote many famous hymns. Dr. Johnson wrote of him: "His lines are commonly smooth and easy, and his thoughts always religiously pure; but who is there that, to so much piety and innocence, does not wish for a greater measure of sprightliness and vigor!" It was said of Watts that he was "a man who never wrote but for a good purpose."

161. Taylor. "Taylor," said Johnson to Mrs. Thrale in 1773, "is better acquainted with my heart than any man or woman now alive."

161. A gentleman of eminence. Probably Dr. Thomas Warton.

162. Garrick. Hill (iii, 185) quotes from Hannah More's *Memoirs* a query she once put to Garrick. She asked him "why Johnson was so often harsh and unkind in his speeches both of him and to him. 'Why,' he replied, 'it is very natural; is it not to be expected he should be angry that I, who have so much less merit than he, should have had so much greater success?'"

167. John Wesley (1703-1791). An English divine, one of the founders of Methodism. Southey says of him, "His manners were almost irresistibly winning, and his cheerfulness was like perpetual sunshine." (Cf. Hill, iii, 261.)

167. *Memoirs de Fontenelle*. Bernard de Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757) was the nephew of the great French dramatist Corneille, and himself an author.

167. Allan Ramsay. An eminent painter, son of the Scotch poet and bookseller who wrote *The Gentle Shepherd*. He died in 1784, in the seventy-third year of his life.

167. Young. Dr. Edward Young (1683-1765) was an English clergyman, whose chief work, *The Night Thoughts*, is highly melancholic. Gosse says that "it was in the sonorous blank verse of this adroit poem that the vague æsthetic melancholy of the age found its most striking exposition." That Young "was the victim of affectation seems proved by the story that he wrote at night by the glimmer of a candle stuck in a human skull." According to Johnson, in his *Night Thoughts* Young exhibited "a very wide display of original poetry, variegated with deep reflections and striking allusions, — a wilderness of thought, in which the fertility of fancy scatters flowers of every hue and every odor." In this poem occur the famous lines, "All men think all men mortal but themselves," and "Procrastination is the thief of time."

168. Fox. Charles James Fox (1749-1806), an English statesman and orator, who opposed George III's American policy. William Hunt says of him: "No man ever has enjoyed greater popularity than Fox. His disposition was amiable and generous, his good nature inexhaustible, his heart full of warm and humane feelings." Under Burke's influence he was gradually interested in the cause of reform and progress.

168. Caught. This form for "caught" was still in good use in Johnson's day.

169. The Stephani. The brothers Estienne (Latin, Stephanus) were printers and scholars of the Renaissance.

170. Chaucer and Gower. Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?-1400) is called "the father of English poetry." His friend John Gower (1330-1408) helped to establish English as a literary tongue. The former's *Canterbury Pilgrimage* is a vivid picture of the men and

manners, the thoughts and opinions of the fourteenth century, beside being a collection of very entertainingly told stories. During the age of Johnson, Chaucer was somewhat neglected.

170. Dr. Burney. Charles Burney (1726-1814) was an English composer and writer. His best known work is *The History of Music*. Dr. Johnson was very fond of him. For his daughter, Fanny Burney, see page 274.

170. Miss Hannah More. An English author (1745-1833), who wrote chiefly semi-religious stories. Thomas Babington Macaulay frequently visited her as a boy and young man, and no doubt heard at first hand from her many stories regarding Johnson's eccentricities and regarding Boswell. Her best work is "the very diverting though didactic novel, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*," says Gosse.

170. Potter's Æschylus. Æschylus (525-456 B.C.), the great Greek tragic poet, was translated in 1777 by Robert Potter (1721-1804), a clergyman.

171. Numerous prose. Rhythmical prose.

171. Sir William Temple (1628-1699). An English diplomat and essayist, of whom Swift said that there died with him "all that was good and amiable among men." His prose style is almost modern in tone, and has served as a model for many later writers. He is the author of the famous sentence: "When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and humored a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over." Macaulay wrote an interesting essay on Temple.

171. Clarendon. Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon (1608-1674) was a royalist statesman and writer, author of a *History of the Great Rebellion*. A. W. Ward says of him: "Clarendon's style, like every style that attracts or interests, is the man. . . . He sometimes comes near true wit, and occasionally has a picturesque turn; but he very rarely rises into true eloquence." The *History* shows on every page, critics note, that Clarendon was not primarily a student, but rather a soldier, an administrator, and a politician. Clarendon's character-sketches, many of them of men he knew personally, are especially noteworthy.

171. Martial. A Latin epigrammatic poet of whom Johnson was very fond. He is the model of the modern epigrammatist, and has been endlessly imitated.

172. Rich. The manager of the Covent Garden Theatre.

173. Lord Mansfield. A great English judge of this period, who presided over many political trials with marked fairness. Johnson admired him greatly.

174. Miss Seward, the poetess of Lichfield. Anna Seward (1747-1809), called "The Swan of Lichfield," was a famous imitator of the style of Johnson.

180. Lord Orrery. Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery (1621-1679), an Irish nobleman of great political and literary talents, author of a

number of plays. He introduced rhymed tragedies on the English stage.

180. George Psalmanazar (1679?–1763). A famous imposter, who pretended to be an inhabitant of the island of Formosa (near Japan), and published a fictitious description of the place. Later he became a clergyman and confessed his deception. His later life was regular and sincere. Johnson revered Psalmanazar highly, and said he had never ventured to contradict the latter.

180. A gentleman. Probably Langton.

182. Blackmore, Watts, Pomfret, and Yalden. Sir Richard Blackmore (1650?–1729), author of *Creation, King Arthur*, and other massive works, beside many medical treatises, was the favorite butt of the wits and critics of his day. Johnson wrote of Blackmore that he formed magnificent designs in his poems, but was careless of particular and subordinate elegances. Cowper said of him that he had committed "more absurdities in verse than any [other] writer of our country." To Blackmore are attributed the exquisitely absurd lines:

A painted vest Prince Voltiger had on,
Which from a naked Pict his grandsire won.

For Watts, see page 269. Of *The Choice* of John Pomfret (1667–1703) Johnson said that "perhaps no composition in our language has been more often perused." It is now, however, quite extinct. Mrs. Browning called Pomfret "the concentrate essence of namby-pambyism." *The Hymn to Darkness* of Thomas Yalden (1671–1736) is accounted his best performance.

185. Ludovico Ariosto (1474–1533). An Italian poet, who wrote *Orlando Furioso*, an epic tale of the time of Charlemagne. Shelley said of him that he was only sometimes a poet. Garnett (*A History of Italian Literature*) characterizes him as "always fanciful, always musical, always elevated, though not always to a great altitude, above the level of the choicest prose."

185. Spenser's Fairy Queen. Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) was the first of the great poets of the Elizabethan Age. He was called by Milton "our sage and serious poet Spenser," and by Wordsworth "Brother, Englishman, and Friend." His sonnets, odes, tales, and above all, his great work *The Faërie Queene* (as it is usually spelled) all teach "duty and high endeavor;" they are filled with lofty enthusiasm for virtue and idealism. *The Faërie Queene*, a poem of wonderful beauty and sweet music, has greatly influenced later poets. It is an allegory of many episodes.

185. Diogenes Laertius. A Greek historian, of about 200 A.D., who wrote biographies of the Greek philosophers.

186. An Englishman. Reynolds said, however, that "the prejudices he had to countries did not extend to individuals." (Cf. Hill, iv, 17.)

187. Dr. Berkeley's ingenious philosophy. George Berkeley (1685-1753) believed that what we call matter or substance is only an idea of the mind. His philosophy is a variety of *idealism*. Pope declared of Berkeley that "he was possessed of every virtue under heaven."

188. Cowley. The verse of Abraham Cowley (1618-1667) is marred by its complexity and has long been neglected. His prose essays are pleasantly and simply written. Johnson characterized him as follows: "In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskillful selection; with much thought, but with little imagery; that he is never pathetic, and never sublime, but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound." Of his essays, however, he wrote: "His style has a smooth and placid equability." Charles II exclaimed at his death, "Mr. Cowley has not left behind him a better man in England!" He lies beside Chaucer and Spenser in Westminster Abbey.

189. Edmund Waller (1606-1687). An English poet, who made English verse smooth and rather mechanical after the era of the Elizabethans, and is regarded as the chief predecessor of Dryden and Pope. His chief poems are those inscribed to Sacharissa, especially *On a Girdle*. The general character of his poetry," said Johnson, "is elegance and gaiety." Waller played a considerable rôle in the political life of his time. His poems are for the most part forgotten.

191. Lyttelton. George, Lord Lyttelton (1709-1773), an English statesman and poet, wrote *Dialogues of the Dead*. Johnson expressed very little admiration for Lyttelton's work in his *Life* of him. He said of his poems: "They leave nothing to be despised, and little to be admired. . . . His blank verse in *Blenheim* has neither much force nor much elegance. His little performances, whether songs or epigrams, are sometimes sprightly and sometimes insipid."

191. Mrs. Montagu. Elizabeth Montagu (1720-1800) was a woman of considerable intellectual ability; she was the first to be called a "blue-stocking." She had a wide circle of famous friends. She wrote an essay on *The Genius of Shakespeare*, in answer to the unfavorable criticisms of Voltaire.

197. Captain Langton. Being at this time on duty at Rochester, he is addressed by a military title.

198. Little Jenny. Jenny Langton, Johnson's god-daughter.

200. The library. According to Dr. Burney (quoted Hill, iv, 181), "The family lived in the library, which used to be the parlor. There they breakfasted. Over the bookcases were hung Sir Joshua's portraits of Mr. Thrale's friends — Baretti, Burke, Burney, Chambers, Garrick, Goldsmith, Johnson, Murphy, Reynolds, Lord Sandys, Lord Westcote, and in the same picture Mrs. Thrale and her eldest daughter." Thrale's portrait, Dr. Hill adds, was also there.

201. Sold Charles the First. By an arrangement with the English, Charles I was delivered into the hands of the soldiers of the Commonwealth after he had fled to Scotland. Later he was tried and executed.

204. Cant. One of the five meanings Johnson gives to cant is: "A whining pretension to goodness in formal and affected terms." (Cf. Hill, iv, 255.)

206. Edmund Allen. His landlord and next-door neighbor in Bolt-court.

206. Sarcocoele. A form of cancer.

207. Console and amuse his mind. Hill quotes from the Piozzi Letters: "Dec. 31. I have much need of entertainment; spiritless, infirm, sleepless, and solitary, looking back with sorrow and forward with terror."

212. Handel. The fame of the great German musician was honored at the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death by an elaborate public performance.

213. Squire Richard in *The Journey to London*, Colley Cibber's revision of a play by Vanbrugh, a Restoration playwright.

216. The comedy of *The Rehearsal*, by the Duke of Buckingham.

217. The Lord Chancellor. Edward Thurlow, a famous lawyer.

221. Signor Piozzi. Described by the poet, Samuel Rogers, as "a very handsome, gentlemanly, and amiable person." (Cf. Hill, iv, 391.)

223. *Ægri Ephemeris*. Diary of a sick man.

225. Miss Burney. Frances Burney, later Madame D'Arblay (1752-1840), was the daughter of Johnson's friend Dr. Burney. Her records of Johnson's conversation are of the greatest value. She wrote several novels, one of which, *Evelina* (1778), is the best novel in English written by a woman previous to Jane Austen's and George Eliot's works of fiction. See Macaulay's interesting essay on her *Diary*.

225. Die like men. *Psalms*, lxxxii. 7.

226. William Windham (1750-1810). A Whig statesman and orator. Macaulay named him "the finest gentleman of the age."

NOTE. — References in these annotations to critical opinions of Johnson on various writers are usually from his *Lives of the Poets*. References to Gosse are from Garnett & Gosse's *English Literature*, volume iii; to Hill, from his edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

Critical Opinions on Boswell and His "Life of Johnson"

"Here Boswell lies! drop o'er his tomb a tear,
 Let no malignant tongue pursue him here;
 Bury his failings in the silent grave,
 And from unfriendly hands his memory save.
 Record the praise he purchased, let his name
 Mount on the wings of literary fame,
 And to his honor say, 'Here Boswell lies,
 Whose pleasing pen adorned the good and wise,
 Whose memory down the stream of time shall flow
 Far as famed Johnson's or Paoli's go!'"

— *Proposed Epitaph by Robert Boswell.*

"'Who is this Scotch cur at Johnson's heels?' asked someone, amazed at the sudden intimacy. 'He is not a cur,' answered Goldsmith; 'you are too severe. He is only a burr. Tom Davies flung him at Johnson in sport and he has the faculty of sticking.'"

— *Sir James Prior.*

"Few figures were better known in London artistic and literary society than his — paunchy and puffy, with red face, long cocked nose, protuberant mouth and chin, with much solemnity of manner and voice, with slow gait and slovenly dress — the clothes being loose, the wig untidy, the gestures restless so as to resemble his great master, of whom he incessantly spoke, and whose big manner and oddities he mimicked with infinite drollery, making listeners convulse with laughter at the exquisite, but irreverent copy of his 'revered friend.'" — *Henry Gray Graham.*

"Considering the eminent persons to whom it relates, the quantity of miscellaneous information and entertaining gossip which it brings together, [it] may be termed, without exception, the best parlor-window book that was ever written." — *Sir Walter Scott.*

"It was a strange and fortunate concurrence, that one so prone to talk and who talked so well, should be brought into close contact and confidence with one so zealous and so able to record. Dr. Johnson was a man of extraordinary powers, but Mr. Boswell had qualities, in their own way, almost as rare. He united lively manners with indefatigable diligence, and the volatile curiosity of a *man about town* with the drudging patience of a *chronicler* with a very good opinion of himself; he was quick in discerning, and frank in applauding, the excellencies of others. Though proud of his own name and lineage, and ambitious of the countenance of the great, he was yet so cordial an admirer of *merit*, wherever found, that much public ridicule, and something like contempt, were excited by the *modest assurance* with which he pressed his acquaintance on all the *notorieties* of his time. His contemporaries indeed, not without

some color of reason, occasionally complained of him as vain, inquisitive, troublesome, and giddy; but his vanity was inoffensive — his curiosity was commonly directed towards laudable objects — when he meddled he did so, generally, from good-natured motives — his giddiness was only an exuberant gayety, which never failed in the respect and reverence due to literature, morals, and religion.”

— *John Wilson Croker.*

“The *Life of Johnson* is assuredly a great, a very great work. Homer is not more decidedly the first of heroic poets, Shakespeare is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators, than Boswell is the first of biographers. He has no second. He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly that it is not worth while to place them. Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere.

“We are not sure that there is in the whole history of the human intellect so strange a phenomenon as this book. Many of the greatest men that ever lived have written biography. Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived, and he has beaten them all. He was, if we are to give any credit to his own account or to the united testimony of all who knew him, a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect. . . . Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot and a sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a tale-bearer, an eavesdropper, a common butt in the taverns of London, so curious to know everybody who was talked about, that, Tory and high Churchman as he was, he manœuvred, we have been told, for an introduction to Tom Paine, so vain of the most childish distinction, that when he had been to court, he drove to the office where his book was printing without changing his clothes, and summoned all the printer’s devils to admire his new ruffles and sword; such was this man, and such he was content and proud to be. Everything which another man would have hidden, everything the publication of which would have made another man hang himself, was matter of gay and clamorous exultation to his weak and diseased mind. . . .

“That such a man should have written one of the best books in the world is strange enough. But this is not all. Many persons who have conducted themselves foolishly in active life, and whose conversation has indicated no superior powers of mind, have left us valuable works. Goldsmith was very justly described by one of his contemporaries as an inspired idiot, and by another as a being

‘Who wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll.’

La Fontaine was in society a mere simpleton. His blunders would not come in amiss among the stories of Hierocles. But these men attained literary eminence in spite of their weaknesses. Boswell attained it by reason of his weaknesses. If he had not been a great

fool, he would never have been a great writer. Without all the qualities which made him the jest and the torment of those among whom he lived, without the officiousness, the inquisitiveness, the effrontery, the toad-eating, the insensibility to all reproof, he never could have produced so excellent a book. He was a slave, proud of his servitude, a Paul Pry, convinced that his own curiosity and garrulity were virtues, an unsafe companion who never scrupled to repay the most liberal hospitality by the basest violation of confidence, a man without delicacy, without shame, without sense enough to know when he was hurting the feelings of others or when he was exposing himself to derision; and because he was all this, he has, in an important department of literature, immeasurably surpassed such writers as Tacitus, Clarendon, Alfieri, and his own idle Johnson.

"Of the talents which ordinarily raise men to eminence as writers, Boswell had absolutely none. There is not in all his books a single remark of his own on literature, politics, religion, or society, which is not either commonplace or absurd. His dissertations on hereditary gentility, on the slave-trade, and on the entailing of landed estates, may serve as examples. To say that these passages are sophistical would be to pay them an extravagant compliment. They have no pretence to argument, or even to meaning. He has reported innumerable observations made by himself in the course of conversation. Of those observations we do not remember one which is above the intellectual capacity of a boy of fifteen. He has printed many of his own letters, and in these letters he is always ranting or twaddling. Logic, eloquence, wit, taste, all those things which are generally considered as making a book valuable, were utterly wanting in him. He had, indeed, a quick observation and a retentive memory. These qualities, if he had been a man of sense and virtue, would scarcely of themselves have sufficed to make him conspicuous; but, because he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb, they have made him immortal."

— *Thomas Babington Macaulay.*

"Boswell has already been much commented upon; but rather in the way of censure and vituperation, than of true recognition. He was a man that brought himself much before the world; confessed that he eagerly coveted fame, or if that were not possible, notoriety; of which latter as he gained far more than seemed his due, the public were incited, not only by their natural love of scandal, but by a special ground of envy, to say whatever ill of him could be said. Out of the fifteen millions that then lived, and had bed and board, in the British Islands, this man has provided us a greater *pleasure* than any other individual, at whose cost we now enjoy ourselves; perhaps has done us a greater *service* than can be specially attributed to more than two or three; yet, ungrateful that we are, no written or spoken eulogy of James Boswell anywhere exists; his

recompense in solid pudding (so far as copyright went) was not excessive; and as for the empty praise, it has altogether been denied him. Men are unwiser than children; they do *not* know the hand that feeds them.

"Boswell was a person whose mean or bad qualities lay open to the general eye; visible, palpable to the dullest. His good qualities belonged not to the Time he lived in; were far from common then; indeed, in such a degree, were almost unexampled; not recognizable therefore by every one; nay, apt even [so strange had they grown] to be confounded with the very vices they lay contiguous to and had sprung out of. That he was a winebibber and gross liver; gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character, is undeniable enough. That he was vain, heedless, a babbler; had much of the sycophant, alternating with the braggadocio, curiously spiced too with an all-pervading dash of the coxcomb; that he gloried much when the Tailor, by a court-suit, had made a new man of him; that he appeared at the Shakespeare Jubilee with a riband, imprinted 'Corsica Boswell,' round his hat;¹ and in short, if you will, lived no day of his life without doing and saying more than one pretentious ineptitude: all this unhappily is evident as the sun at noon. . . .

"Unfortunately, on the other hand, what great and genuine good lay in him was nowise so self-evident. That Boswell was a hunter after spiritual Notabilities, that he loved such, and longed, and even crept and crawled to be near them; that he first (in old Touchwood Auchinleck's phraseology) 'took on with Paoli'; and then being off with 'the Corsican landlouper,' took on with a schoolmaster, 'ane that keepled a schule, and ca'd it an academy': that he did all this, and could not help doing it, we account a very singular merit. The man, once for all, had an 'open sense,' an open loving heart, which so few have: where Excellence existed, he was compelled to acknowledge it; was drawn towards it, and (let the old sulphur-brand of a Laird say what he liked) *could not but* walk with it, — if not as superior, if not as equal, then as inferior and lackey, better so than not at all." — *Thomas Carlyle*.

"As for the Book itself, questionless the universal favor entertained for it is well merited. In worth as a Book we have rated it beyond any other product of the eighteenth century: all Johnson's own writings, laborious and in their kind genuine above most, stand on a quite inferior level to it; already, indeed, they are becoming obsolete for this generation; and for some future generation may be valuable chiefly as Prolegomena and expository Scholia to this *Johnsoniad* of Boswell. Which of us but remembers, as one of the sunny spots in his existence, the day when he opened these airy

¹ Investigation has now proved that this story of Boswell and his riband is quite without foundation. — Ed.

volumes, fascinating him by a true natural-magic! It was as if the curtains of the past were drawn aside, and we looked mysteriously into a kindred country, where dwelt our Fathers; inexpressibly dear to us, but which had seemed forever hidden from our eyes. For the dead Night had engulfed it; all was gone, vanished as if it had not been. Nevertheless, wondrously given back to us, there once more it lay; all bright, lucid, blooming; a little island of Creation amid the circumambient Void. There it still lies; like a thing stationary, imperishable, over which changeful Time were now accumulating itself in vain, and could not, any longer, harm it or hide it."

— *Thomas Carlyle.*

"Boswell's unconscious art is wonderful, and so is the result attained. The book has arrested, as never book did before, time and decay. Boszy is really a wizard: he makes the sun stand still."

— *Alexander Smith.*

"Boswell's *Johnson* is for me a sort of test-book: according to a man's judgment of it, I am apt to form my judgment of him. It may not always be a very good test, but it is never a very bad one."

— *George Henry Lewes.*

"Boswell's charm for us is ever his inextinguishable and instinctive humanity — the transparent way in which, through the infinite variety of moods that chase one another over the surface of his mind, he thinks aloud (as primitive men and criminals, it is said, are wont to do) and in the thinking aloud reveals the iridescent Everyman that lurks in each one of us." — *Thomas Seccombe.*

"His singular gifts as an observer could only escape notice from a careless or inexperienced reader. Boswell has a little of the true Shakespearian secret. He lets his characters show themselves without obtruding unnecessary comment. He never misses the point of a story, though he does not ostentatiously call our attention to it. He gives just what is wanted to indicate character, or to explain the full meaning of a repartee. It is not till we compare his reports with those of less skillful hearers, that we can appreciate the skill with which the essence of a conversation is extracted, and the whole scene indicated by a few telling touches. We are tempted to fancy that we have heard the very thing, really infer that Boswell was simply the mechanical transmitter of the good things uttered. Anyone who will try to put down the pith of a brilliant conversation within the same space, may soon satisfy himself of the absurdity of such an hypothesis, and will learn to appreciate Boswell's powers not only of memory but artistic representation. Such a feat implies not only admirable quickness of appreciation, but a rare literary faculty. Boswell's accuracy is remarkable; but it is the least part of his merit." — *Leslie Stephen.*

"What would the world have thought of Samuel Johnson at the end of a hundred years if a silly little Scottish laird had not made a hero of him, to be worshipped as no literary man was ever worshipped before or since, and if he had not written a biography of him which is the best in any language, and the model for all others?"

— *Lawrence Hutton.*

"The universal verdict of mankind has placed this work among the five or six most interesting and stimulating of the world's books."

— *Edmund Gosse.*

"Those who think that James Boswell was a vain and shallow coxcomb of mediocre abilities, without intellectual gifts of any eminence, are confronted with the fact that this supposed fool was the unaided author of two of the most graphic and most readable works which the eighteenth century has left us. It is right that Boswell's claim to a high independent place in literature should be vindicated, and the fact is that, after Burke and Goldsmith, he is by far the most considerable of the literary companions of Johnson. That he has risen into fame on the shoulders of that great man is true, but the fact has been insisted upon until his own genuine and peculiar merits have been most unduly overlooked."

— *Edmund Gosse.*

"The extraordinary vitality of Johnson is one of the most interesting phenomena in literary history. That the greater part of it did not exhale with the fading memory of his friends is due to the genius of his principal disciple. It has been customary to deny capacity of every kind to James Boswell, who had, indeed, several of the characteristics of a fool; but the qualities which render the *Life of Johnson* one of the great books of the world are not accidental, and it would be an equal injustice to consider them inherent in the subject. The life and letters of Gray, which Mason had published in 1775, gave Boswell a model for his form, but it was a model which he excelled in every feature. By Mason and Boswell a species of literature was introduced into England which was destined to enjoy a popularity that never stood higher than it does at this moment. Biographies had up to this time been perfunctory affairs, either trivial or unessential collections of anecdotes, or else pompous eulogies from which the breath of life was absent. But Mason and Boswell made their heroes paint their own portraits, by the skillful interpolation of letters, by the use of anecdotes, by the manipulation of the recollections of others; they adapted to biography the newly discovered formulas of the anti-romantic novelists, and aimed at the production of a figure that should be interesting, lifelike, and true." — *Edmund Gosse.*

"Boswell was not very witty, nor very wise, but he had an exquisite appreciation of wit and wisdom. He avows again and again that he only recorded portions of what he heard, and the internal evidence would prove of itself without his assertion, that he winnowed his matter. No wholesale or servile report could possess the vigor and raciness of his selections. In one or two instances others have retailed the same conversations as himself, at more than treble the length, and with not the tithe of the spirit. His tact is the more remarkable, that he carefully treasured up trifles, when, to use his own words, 'they were amusing and characteristic,' and it is seldom in these cases that his judgment is at fault. Fitzherbert said that it was not every man who could carry a *bon mot*, and probably no man carries witticisms correctly, who has not himself a full comprehension of their point. Boswell carried repartees, maxims, and arguments with accuracy, because he felt their force, and throughout his work details them in a manner which shows the keenness of his relish. To follow the hum of conversation with so much intelligence, and, amid the confused medley, to distinguish what was worthy to be observed, required unusual quickness of observation and cannot be reconciled to the notion that he was simply endowed with strength of memory." — *Whitwell Elwin*.

"In his accurate reproduction of life, Boswell surpasses all the realists and attains to something of the inexhaustibility of nature itself. Delightful as is his book for mere reading, it can never be fully appreciated till it has been used as a work of reference; for such it was intended to be. The work exhibits, according to the title-page, 'a view of literature and literary men in Great Britain for near half a century.' Boswell aspired to be not only stenographer but historian. And to the life that he loved he was both."

— *Chauncey Brewster Tinker*.

"The scholar is not responsible for the original recording of the facts; he merely reports what he has found; it is not his office to apportion a great man's meed of praise or infamy. Such a practice has at least the approval of Johnson. When, years later, Boswell proposed to print the autobiography of Sir Robert Sibbald, which he thought 'the most natural and candid account of himself that ever was given by any man,' Mrs. Thrale objected, and gave the usual reason: 'To discover such weakness exposes a man when he is gone.' 'Nay,' said Johnson, 'it is an honest picture of human nature.'"

— *Chauncey Brewster Tinker*.

"Those who like Boswell at first like him ever better; those who do not like him at first (such cases have been known) with rare exceptions become converted to him afterwards." — *George Saintsbury*.

"If, as Charles Lamb suggested, we should have a 'grace before books,' what should we say when we have read through Boswell? What should we feel? Johnson used to say that 'want of tenderness was want of parts and was no less a proof of stupidity than depravity.' Is he not right? What could be expected of a man who could read the *Life of Johnson* and the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* and remain so incapable of tenderness as not to love the man who wrote them?" — *T. R. Glover.*

"It is one of the great charms of Boswell's *Life* that here, as nowhere else in biography, we overhear a large group of remarkable and likable men and women giving their candid opinions of each other, if not always to each other, so that almost every friendship in the book is variegated with an occasional outbreak of hostilities."

— *Robert Lynd.*

The Chief Members of the Club ¹

The *Club* was founded in 1764 by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Dr. Samuel Johnson, and for some years met on Monday evenings. In 1772 the day of meeting was changed to Fridays, and about that time, instead of supping, the Club agreed to dine together once in every fortnight. In 1773 the Club, which at its foundation consisted of twelve members, was enlarged to twenty; in 1777 to twenty-six; in 1778 to thirty; in 1780 to thirty-five. It was then resolved that it should never exceed forty. Originally the Club met at the Turk's Head, in Gerrard Street, London, and continued to meet there until 1783, when their landlord died and the house was shut up. Thereafter, for a time, they met at Prince's in Sackville Street. The Club is still in existence.

1. SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS (1723-1792). A great painter, a clever man, and a fine gentleman. In addition to preserving for us the physical appearance of many of his great contemporaries, and of the fine ladies and gentlemen of the day, Reynolds delivered some able lectures as president of the Royal Academy and contributed three numbers to Johnson's *Idler*. Reynolds, who was rather hard of hearing, usually carried an ear trumpet; it is said that he became particularly hard of hearing when a bore approached.

2. EDMUND BURKE (1729-1797). A great English statesman and an even greater English writer. He was concerned in three great causes: that of the American colonies, whose views he espoused; that of the French Revolution, the violence of which horrified him; and that of Warren Hastings, whom he impeached for his crimes against India. Burke and Johnson entertained the profoundest admiration for each other.

3. BENNET LANGTON (1737-1801). Langton was an ardent student of Greek and Roman writers, and succeeded Johnson as Professor of Ancient Literature in the Royal Academy. He was a man of great goodness of character.

4. TOPHAM BEAUCLERK (1739-1780). Beauclerk was the "fine gentleman" of Johnson's circle. He belonged to an ancient noble family, and reckoned his descent direct from Henry IV of France and Charles II of England. He had undoubted talents and won the close affection of Langton and of Johnson.

5. OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728-1774). Every group has its butt: Goldsmith, whose genius was equalled by none, was the butt of the Club, although now and then he managed to get in a shrewd retort. (See his *Retaliation*.) Goldsmith produced several masterpieces of different kinds: a great novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*; a great play, *She Stoops to Conquer*; and a great poem, *The Deserted Village*. He wrote much else, and all of his works are interesting reading. Of

¹See also pages 248-9.

the Club, Goldsmith and Gibbon had least to be vain of in personal appearance, and both were rather sensitive on this point.

6. THOMAS PERCY (1729-1811). Dr. Percy was a clergyman and antiquarian. His *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1764) was one of the most influential books of the century and helped to produce the romantic revival in poetry. Dr. Johnson by disposition was unable to appreciate the views and tendencies of Bishop Percy and his work.

7. DAVID GARRICK (1716-1779). Probably the greatest English actor of any age, equally able in parts of comedy and tragedy. By his performance of Shakespeare, Garrick helped to revive the influence of that great writer. Johnson said of his death that it "eclipsed the gayety of nations."

8. SIR WILLIAM JONES (1746-1794). A famous lawyer and student of Oriental literature. Jones had a remarkably wide knowledge of the literatures of the East, and helped to make them known to English readers. He also wrote some excellent verse; his best-known lines are "What Constitutes a State?"

9. EDWARD GIBBON (1737-1794). Gibbon's greatest work was *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The style of this is magnificent and eloquent, and is said to have been influenced by Johnson. Gibbon, like Goldsmith, was rather displeasing in appearance.

10. ADAM SMITH (1723-1790). A Scotch writer, author of the standard work, *The Wealth of Nations*, which established the science of political economy.

11. RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN (1751-1816). Sheridan was the son of Johnson's one-time friend Thomas Sheridan. He wrote two of the finest comedies in the language: *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*, both still performed. After a successful career as a dramatist, he entered Parliament and attained great renown as an orator.

12. EDMUND MALONE (1741-1812). A noted Shakespearian scholar. Malone constantly aided Boswell with advice during the writing of the *Life of Johnson*, and after Boswell's death he revised the later editions.

Retaliation: A Poem, by Oliver Goldsmith

Including Epitaphs on the Most Distinguished Wits of this Metropolis

[These verses were first published on April 18, 1774, just a fortnight after the author's death, and several editions were required in the same year. According to an account attributed to David Garrick, the origin of the poem is as follows: At a meeting of a company of gentlemen, all well known to one another, they diverted themselves, among other things, with the peculiar oddities of Dr. Goldsmith, who would never admit that anyone else was superior to him in any art, from writing poetry down to dancing a hornpipe. The Doctor on this occasion insisted with great eagerness on trying his epigrammatic powers with Mr. Garrick. It was agreed that each was to write the other's epitaph. Mr. Garrick immediately said that his epitaph was finished, and he produced the following distich:

Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness call'd Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, but talk'd like poor Poll.

Goldsmith, upon the company's laughing very heartily, grew very thoughtful, and either would not, or could not, write anything at that time. However, he went to work, and some weeks later he produced the poem, *Retaliation*, which immediately made a decided hit.]

Of old, when Scarron¹ his companions invited,
Each guest brought his dish, and the feast was united;
If our landlord² supplies us with beef and with fish,
Let each guest bring himself — and he brings the best dish:
Our Dean³ shall be venison, just fresh from the plains;
Our Burke⁴ shall be tongue, with a garnish of brains;
Our Will⁵ shall be wild-fowl, of excellent flavor,
And Dick⁶ with his pepper shall heighten the savor.
Our Cumberland's⁷ sweetbread its place shall obtain;
And Douglas⁸ is pudding, substantial and plain;
Our Garrick's a salad, for in him we see
Oil, vinegar, sugar, and saltiness agree:
To make out the dinner, full certain I am,
That Ridge⁹ is anchovy, and Reynolds¹⁰ is lamb;
That Hickey's¹¹ a capon; and, by the same rule,
Magnanimous Goldsmith a gooseberry fool.
At a dinner so various — at such a repast,
Who'd not be a glutton, and stick to the last?
Here, waiter, more wine! let me sit while I'm able,
Till all my companions sink under the table;
Then, with chaos and blunders encircling my head,
Let me ponder, and tell what I think of the dead.

Here lies our good Edmund, whose genius was such,
 We scarcely can praise it or blame it too much;
 Who, born for the universe, narrow'd his mind,
 And to party gave up what was meant for mankind:
 Though fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat
 To persuade Tommy Townshend¹² to lend him a vote;
 Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on refining,
 And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining:¹³
 Though equal to all things, for all things unfit;
 Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit;
 For a patriot, too cool; for a drudge, disobedient;
 And too fond of the *right* to pursue the *expedient*.
 In short, 'twas his fate, unemploy'd or in place, sir,
 To eat mutton cold, and cut blocks with a razor.

Here lies David Garrick, describe me who can,
 An abridgment of all that was pleasant in man;
 As an actor, confess't without rival to shine,
 As a wit, if not first, in the very first line:
 Yet with talents like these, and an excellent heart,
 This man had his failings, a dupe to his art.
 Like an ill-judging beauty, his colors he spread,
 And beplaster'd with rouge his own natural red.
 On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting;
 'Twas only that when he was off he was acting.
 With no reason on earth to go out of his way,
 He turn'd and he varied full ten times a day:
 Though secure of our hearts, yet confoundedly sick
 If they were not his own by finessing and trick:
 He cast off his friends, as a huntsman his pack,
 For he knew when he pleased he could whistle them **back**.
 Of praise a mere glutton, he swallow'd what came,
 And the puff of a dunce, he mistook it for fame;
 'Till his relish, grown callous almost to disease,
 Who pepper'd the most, was surest to please.
 But let us be candid, and speak out our mind,
 If dunces applauded, he paid them in kind.
 Ye Kenricks, ye Kellys, and Woodfalls¹⁴ so grave,
 What a commerce was yours, while you got and you **gave**!
 How did Grub Street re-echo the shouts that you raised,
 While he was be-Roscious'd, and you were bepraised!
 But peace to his spirit wherever it flies,
 To act as an angel and mix with the skies:
 Those poets who owe their best fame to his skill
 Shall still be flatterers, go where he will,
 Old Shakespeare receive him with praise and with love,
 And Beaumonts and Bens¹⁵ be his Kellys above.

Here Reynolds is laid, and, to tell you my mind,
 He has not left a wiser or better behind;
 His pencil was striking, resistless, and grand,
 His manners were gentle, complying, and bland:
 Still born to improve us in every part,

His pencil our faces, his manners our heart.
 To coxcombs averse, yet most civilly steering,
 When they judg'd without skill, he was still hard of hearing:
 When they talk'd of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,
 He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff.

Notes. — 1. Scarron. — An old French dramatist. 2. Our landlord. — The master of the St. James's Coffee-house. 3. Our Dean. — Dr. Barnard, Dean of Derry. 4. Our Burke. — Edmund Burke. 5. Our Will. — William Burke, a kinsman of Edmund and a member of Parliament. 6. Dick. — Richard Burke, a younger brother of Edmund. 7. Cumberland. — Richard Cumberland, a dramatist. 8. Douglas. — Dr. John Douglas, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury. 9. Ridge. — A member of the Irish bar. 10. Reynolds. — Sir Joshua Reynolds. 11. Hickey. — An eminent attorney. 12. Tommy Townshend. — A member of Parliament, afterwards Lord Sydney. 13. They thought of dining. — It is said that the beginning of a speech by Burke was regarded as an opportunity by his fellow members of Parliament for retiring to dinner. On the floor Burke's speeches were often ineffective, because too long and too thoughtful, but when they were published after oral delivery in pamphlet form they proved very powerful. Burke was known by the sobriquet of "the dinner-bell." 14. Kenricks, Kellys, and Woodfalls. — Contemporary dramatists and journalists, of a very minor sort, who praised Garrick extravagantly and compared him to Roscius, the great Roman actor, and in turn were as extravagantly praised by him. 15. Beaumonts and Bens. — Francis Beaumont and Ben Jonson were two of the great contemporaries of Shakespeare.

Goldsmith's poem is to our regret unfinished. It is likely that if he had lived, he would have added several passages — possibly a sketch of Johnson, certainly a sketch of himself.

After Finishing Boswell: Suggested Reading

Have you enjoyed reading Boswell? Then go on to the rest of his great biography; you will enjoy all of it. For anyone who becomes an enthusiast on the subject of Dr. Johnson, there is an immense literature through which to travel — and more is being added every year.

The following books will all contribute to the understanding of Johnson and of his era. As you read the books, be prepared to answer these questions:

1. State very briefly some of the actual *facts* gleaned from your reading: make this a concise synopsis of what you have read.

2. If possible, give some interesting details of the life of the period supplied by the book you read.

3. What light was thrown on Johnson or Boswell by your reading? In what respects do you now understand Johnson or Boswell better?

4. Pick out all interesting references to the men whom you find mentioned both in the *Life of Johnson* and in the supplementary volume.

5. Write a frank personal opinion of the book read. Is it a valuable book? What are the characteristics of its style?

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

I. *Three Good Editions of Boswell Unabridged*

Arnold Glover Edition, Dutton, 3 volumes

Everyman Library Edition, Dutton, 2 volumes

George Birkbeck Hill Edition, Harpers, 6 volumes

II. *Johnsoniana*

BAILEY, J. C. *Dr. Johnson and His Circle*

BOSWELL, JAMES. *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*

BROADLEY, A. M. *Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale*

CARLYLE, THOMAS. "Essay on Boswell's *Life of Johnson*"

CARLYLE, THOMAS. *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* ("The Hero as Man of Letters: Johnson")

CRAIG, W. H. *Dr. Johnson and the Fair Sex: A Study of Contrasts*

ELWIN, WHITWELL. *Some Eighteenth Century Men of Letters*, Vol. II

GRANT, FRANCIS. *Life of Johnson*

HILL, G. B. *Dr. Johnson, His Friends and His Critics*

HILL, G. B. *Johnsonian Miscellanies*

HOWARD, ALFRED, Ed. *The Beauties of Johnson*

JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *The Essays of Johnson* (S. J. Reid, Ed.)

JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *History of Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*

- JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *Letters* (collected and edited by G. B. Hill)
 JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*
 (G. B. Hill, Ed., or Arthur Waugh, Ed.)
 JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *Select Essays* (G. B. Hill, Ed.)
 JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *Selections* (C. G. Osgood, Ed.)
 JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *The Six Chief Lives of Johnson's "Lives of the Poets"* (Matthew Arnold, Ed.)
 JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *Wit and Wisdom* (G. B. Hill, Ed.)
 JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *Works* (A. Chalmers, Ed.)
 JOHNSON, SAMUEL. *Works* (Literary Club Ed.)
 MASON, E. T., Ed. *Samuel Johnson, His Words and His Ways*
 MEYNELL, ALICE, and CHESTERTON, G. K. *Samuel Johnson* (Selections)
 RALEIGH, SIR WALTER A. *Samuel Johnson*
 RALEIGH, SIR WALTER A. *Six Essays on Johnson*
 THRALE, H. L. *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson*
 TINKER, C. B. *Dr. Johnson and Fanny Burney*

III. Boswelliana

- BAILEY, MARGERY, Ed. *James Boswell's "The Hypochondriack"*
 BOSWELL, JAMES. *Letters to the Rev. W. J. Temple* (Thomas Seccombe, Ed.)
 CARLYLE, THOMAS. "Essay on Boswell's *Life of Johnson*"
 ELWIN, WHITWELL. *Some Eighteenth Century Men of Letters*, Vol. II
 FITZGERALD, P. H. *Croker's Boswell and Boswell*
 FITZGERALD, P. H. *Life of James Boswell*
 MACAULAY, T. B. "Essay on Boswell's *Life of Johnson*"
 TINKER, C. B. *Young Boswell*
 TINKER, C. B., Ed. *The Letters of James Boswell*

IV. Fiction in Which Johnson Is a Character

- BODKIN, M. M. *In the Days of Goldsmith*
 BUCHAN, JOHN. *Midwinter*
 CHESTERTON, G. K. *The Judgment of Dr. Johnson* (a play)
 COLVILLE, HARRIET. *Life's Anchor*
 FREEMAN, R. M. *The New Boswell*
 MOORE, F. F. *A Nest of Linnets*
 MOORE, F. F. *The Jessamy Bride*
 MOORE, F. F. *Fanny's First Novel*
 THACKERAY, W. M. *The Virginians*

V. Eighteenth-Century Writers

- ADDISON, JOSEPH and STEELE, SIR RICHARD. *The Spectator*
 ALDEN, R. M., Ed. *Readings in English Prose of the Eighteenth Century*

- BURKE, EDMUND. "Speech on Conciliation with America"
 BURKE, EDMUND. "A Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol"
 BURNEY, FRANCES (MADAME D'ARBLAY). *Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*
 BURNEY, FRANCES. *Diary and Letters*
 LORD CHESTERFIELD. *Best Letters* (E. G. Johnson, Ed.)
 CIBBER, COLLEY. *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber*
 DRYDEN, JOHN. "MacFlecknoe"
 DRYDEN, JOHN. "Absalom and Achitophel"
 DRYDEN, JOHN. *All for Love, or the World Well Lost*
 FIELDING, HENRY. *Amelia*
 GOLDSMITH, OLIVER. *She Stoops to Conquer*
 GOLDSMITH, OLIVER. "The Traveler"
 GOLDSMITH, OLIVER. "The Deserted Village"
 GOLDSMITH, OLIVER. *The Vicar of Wakefield*
 GRAY, THOMAS. *Poetical Works*
 MACPHERSON, JAMES. *Poems of Ossian*
 PERCY, THOMAS. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*
 POPE, ALEXANDER. "The Rape of the Lock"
 POPE, ALEXANDER. "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot"
 POPE, ALEXANDER. "Essay on Man"
 RICHARDSON, SAMUEL. *Clarissa Harlowe*
 SECCOMBE, THOMAS. *The Age of Johnson*
 SHERIDAN, R. B. *The Rivals*
 SHERIDAN, R. B. *The School for Scandal*
 SWIFT, JONATHAN. *Gulliver's Travels*
 SWIFT, JONATHAN. *The Journal to Stella*

VI. Men and Manners of the Eighteenth Century

- ARCHER, THOMAS. *The Highway of Letters*
 BAKER, H. B. *English Actors*
 BEERS, H. A. *English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century*
 BIRRELL, AUGUSTINE. *In the Name of the Bodleian.*
 BIRRELL, AUGUSTINE. *Men, Women, and Books*
 BIRRELL, AUGUSTINE. *Obiter Dicta*
 BOTSFORD, J. B. *English Society in the Eighteenth Century as Influenced from Oversea*
 BOULTON, W. B. *The Amusements of Old London*
 CALLOW, EDWARD. *Old London Taverns*
 Cambridge History of English Literature, Vols. VII, VIII, IX, X
 DENNIS, JOHN. *The Age of Pope*
 DOBSON, AUSTIN. *Eighteenth Century Studies*
 DOBSON, AUSTIN. *Eighteenth Century Vignettes*
 DOBSON, AUSTIN. *Oliver Goldsmith: A Memoir*
 GARNETT, RICHARD, and GOSSE, EDMUND. *English Literature: An Illustrated Record*, Vol. III

- GEORGE, DOROTHY. *England in Johnson's Day*
 GOSSE, EDMUND. *A History of Eighteenth Century Literature*
 GUINEY, L. I. *A Little English Gallery*
 HALE, SUSAN. *Men and Manners of the Eighteenth Century*
 HUBBARD, ELBERT. *Little Journeys to the Homes of Eminent Orators*
 HUBBARD, ELBERT. *Little Journeys to the Homes of Eminent Painters*
 IRVING, WASHINGTON. *Oliver Goldsmith: A Biography*
 LAMB, CHARLES. *Essays of Elia*
 MACAULAY, T. B. *History of England from the Accession of James II*
 MACAULAY, T. B. "Essay on Madame D'Arblay"
 MILLAR, J. H. *The Mid-Eighteenth Century*
 MOORE, F. F. *A Georgian Pageant*
 PASTON, GEORGE. *Sidelights on the Georgian Period*
 PERRY, T. S. *English Literature in the Eighteenth Century*
 PLANCHE, J. R. *History of British Costume*
 PULLING, F. S. *Sir Joshua Reynolds*
 ROBINS, EDWARD. *Twelve Great Actors*
 SAINTE-BEUVE, C. A. *Portraits of the Eighteenth Century*
 SECCOMBE, THOMAS. *The Age of Johnson*
 SEELY, L. B. *Mrs. Thrale, Afterwards Mrs. Piozzi*
 SIDNEY, W. C. *England and the English in the Eighteenth Century*
 STEPHEN, LESLIE. *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century*
 SWEETSER, M. F. *Artist Biographies* (Vol. III: Reynolds)
 SYNGE, M. B. *Short History of Social Life in England*
 TAINE, H. A. *History of English Literature*
 THACKERAY, W. M. *English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century*
 THACKERAY, W. M. *The Four Georges*
 TINKER, C. B. *The Salon and English Letters*
 TRAILL, H. B. *Social England*, Vol. V
 TURBERVILLE, A. S. *English Men and Manners in the Eighteenth Century*
 WHARTON, GRACE and PHILIP. *Wits and Beaux of Society*
 WHEATLEY, H. B. *Hogarth's London*

VII. Some Notable Biographies and Autobiographies

- ADDAMS, JANE. *Twenty Years at Hull House*
 ANTIN, MARY. *The Promised Land*
 BARRIE, SIR JAMES M. *Margaret Ogilvy*
 BEER, THOMAS. *Stephen Crane*
 BOK, EDWARD. *Americanization of Edward Bok*
 BRADFORD, GAMALIEL. *Damaged Souls*
 BROWNE, LEWIS. *That Man Heine*
 BURROUGHS, JOHN. *My Boyhood*
 CARLYLE, THOMAS. *Life of Schiller*
 CHARNWOOD, LORD. *Abraham Lincoln*

- CLEMENS, S. L. ("Mark Twain"). *Life on the Mississippi*
EVANS, ROBLEY D. *A Sailor's Log*
FORD, HENRY J. *Woodrow Wilson, The Man and His Work*
FRANKLIN, BENJAMIN. *Autobiography*
GARLAND, HAMLIN. *A Son of the Middle Border*
GRENFELL, W. T. *A Labrador Doctor*
GUEDALLA, PHILIP. *The Second Empire*
HOLMES, S. J. *Louis Pasteur*
HUDLESTON, F. J. "Gentleman Johnny" *Burgoyne*
HUDSON, W. H. *Far Away and Long Ago*
JEFFERIES, RICHARD. *The Story of My Heart*
JEFFERSON, JOSEPH. *Autobiography*
KELLER, HELEN. *The Story of My Life*
KLEIN, HERMANN. *The Reign of Patti*
LAGERLÖF, SELMA. *Mårbacka*
LEUPP, FRANCIS E. *Life of George Westinghouse*
LOCKHART, JOHN. *Life of Sir Walter Scott*
LONG, J. C. *Bryan, the Great Commoner*
LUDWIG, EMIL. *Napoleon*
LYNCH, DENIS TILDEN. "Boss" *Tweed*
MAUROIS, ANDRÉ. *Ariel, The Life of Shelley*
MAUROIS, ANDRÉ. *Disraeli*
MORLEY, JOHN. *Edmund Burke*
PAINE, A. B. *Life of Mark Twain*
PALMER, H. H. *The Life of Alice Freeman Palmer*
PUPIN, MICHAEL. *From Immigrant to Inventor*
RUSSELL, PHILLIPS. *Benjamin Franklin, the First Civilized American*
SABATIER, PAUL. *Life of St. Francis of Assisi*
SEITZ, DON C. *Joseph Pulitzer*
SOUTHEY, ROBERT. *Life of Nelson*
STRACHEY, LYTTON. *Queen Victoria*
TREVELYAN, G. O. *Life of Thomas Babington Macaulay*
VESTAL, STANLEY. *Kit Carson, The Happy Warrior of the Old West*
WASHINGTON, BOOKER T. *Up from Slavery*
WINKLER, J. K. *Hearst, An American Phenomenon*
WOODWARD, W. E. *Meet General Grant*
WOOLMAN, JOHN. *Journal*

Questions and Exercises on Boswell's "Life of Dr. Johnson"

Note. — Answers to all questions should be supported by citations of definite passages in the text. Be sure to consult the Index.

1. What striking qualities of Johnson's do you discover in Boswell's account of him?
2. How would you know that Boswell was a Scotchman, aside from his own statements to that effect?
3. Was Boswell absolutely subservient to Johnson's opinions?
4. Does Boswell make any observations of his own that show sense and judgment?
5. Mention some observations of Johnson's that seem to you to throw an interesting light upon human nature and human foibles.
6. What efforts did Boswell make not only to secure facts for his biography of Johnson, but also to make certain that what he said was entirely accurate and truthful?
7. Point out a number of the most striking observations of Johnson's in which the effectiveness proceeds from some unexpected comparison.
8. Point out other observations in which the effectiveness is due simply to exaggeration — hyperbole.
9. Mention others in which the force is due simply to exactness and vigor of utterance.
10. Name some other characteristics of Johnson's remarks, with illustrations.
11. What opinions that Johnson held do you differ from strongly?
12. What evidence is there that many great men regarded Boswell with friendship and respect?
13. Show in what ways Boswell had a thorough understanding of Johnson, even so far as his weaknesses went.
14. Were there any occasions when Boswell was right and Johnson wrong in the opinions they expressed?
15. What qualities in Johnson attracted Boswell strongly? Was it good or bad for Boswell to have so strong a veneration for Johnson?
16. Was Boswell jealous of Johnson's other intimate friends? Why?
17. What was the attitude of Johnson and his contemporaries toward nature and the beauties of scenery?
18. What, on the other hand, was their attitude toward town life? toward human beings and human nature?
19. Mention some peculiar habits and customs of the eighteenth century which are shown in the pages of Boswell.
20. Was Carlyle right in thinking that Boswell's *Life of Johnson* gave a truer and fuller picture of the eighteenth century than any

history could have done? Do you feel, after reading Boswell, that Johnson's era was very different from the one in which you live?

21. What interesting allusions to America are there in Boswell?

22. What instances of rudeness do you find in Johnson's conduct? of kindness? What opinion did he himself hold on bluntness in conversation?

23. Which is the best of Johnson's letters? Why?

24. What, in your opinion, is the most humorous remark of Johnson's? his wisest saying?

25. Why did Johnson talk so freely to Boswell?

Exercises

1. Draw a portrait, in your own words, of Dr. Johnson.

2. Describe one of Johnson's homes in London.

3. Describe Goldsmith or David Garrick — the man and his character.

4. Who was Sir Joshua Reynolds? Topham Beauclerk? Bennet Langton? Oliver Goldsmith? Edmund Burke? David Garrick? Mr. Thrale? Mrs. Thrale? Paoli? General Oglethorpe? James Macpherson? Edward Gibbon? Charles James Fox? George III? Lord Chesterfield?

5. Mention some interesting details regarding Boswell that you gather from the section upon him in the Introduction.

6. What contradictory opinions regarding Boswell are expressed in the "Critical Opinions" cited in the Introduction? What is your own opinion?

7. Report, in the manner of Boswell, an interesting conversation to which you listened recently or in which you participated. After you have finished, ask yourself: Was it as easy as it seemed to make the report? Is any special credit due Boswell for the accuracy and interest of his reports?

8. Name what to your mind were the most interesting incidents in the *Life of Johnson*. Take one of these and write a paragraph regarding it, with the topic: "The most interesting incident in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*."

9. See how much additional information you can obtain regarding each of the members of the Literary Club.

10. Work out a chronological table showing the chief events in Johnson's life and his chief publications.

11. Bring in a report upon one of the following topics: The Dress of Men in Johnson's Time; The Dress of Women; Means of Conveyance; The Prisons of Johnson's Time; The Taverns of Johnson's Time.

12. Bring in a report on one of the following topics: The Tory Party in the Eighteenth Century; The Whig Party in the Eighteenth Century; The Movement to Abolish Slavery; England and America; the Hanover Dynasty.

13. Bring in a report on Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* or *She Stoops to Conquer*.
14. Bring in a report on Johnson's *Rasselas*, his *Idler* papers, or his *Life of Pope*.
15. Bring in a report on Thackeray's *The Virginians* or Moore's *The Jessamy Bride*.
16. Deduce some characteristics of Johnson's style from the extracts in the Appendix.
17. Find in the Notes instances of antithesis in Johnson's sentences.
18. Point out some peculiarities of grammar in Boswell.

Additional Exercises Based on Macaulay's "Life of Johnson"

For pupils who are reading Boswell and Macaulay concurrently.

1. Pick out the passages in Boswell that seem to have furnished Macaulay with the material for the successive paragraphs of his *Life of Johnson*.

2. Has Macaulay compressed or expanded his material?

3. In either case, does Macaulay exaggerate? omit essential details? over-emphasize one or another factor? Is Macaulay in any sense unfair to Johnson?

4. Is the language of Macaulay superior to that of Boswell? Justify your answer.

5. Are you more conscious of "the author behind the pen" in the case of Boswell or in the case of Macaulay?

6. Does Macaulay or Boswell give you a truer sense of those great spiritual qualities of Johnson which have won for him so many admirers in his own time and since?

7. From which biography do you gain a better portrait of the whole man, physical, mental, and spiritual?

8. Macaulay himself was very fond of Boswell — at the moment of his death he was indeed reading the *Life of Johnson*. Was he fair to Boswell? (See the Critical Opinions.)

9. Do you personally prefer Macaulay or Boswell? Why?

10. Which is the better *biography*? What constitutes a good biography?

11. Write a supplementary paragraph — as nearly as possible in Macaulay's own style — based on facts in Boswell's *Life* that Macaulay did not use.

12. Read and report upon Macaulay's and upon Carlyle's essays on Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

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